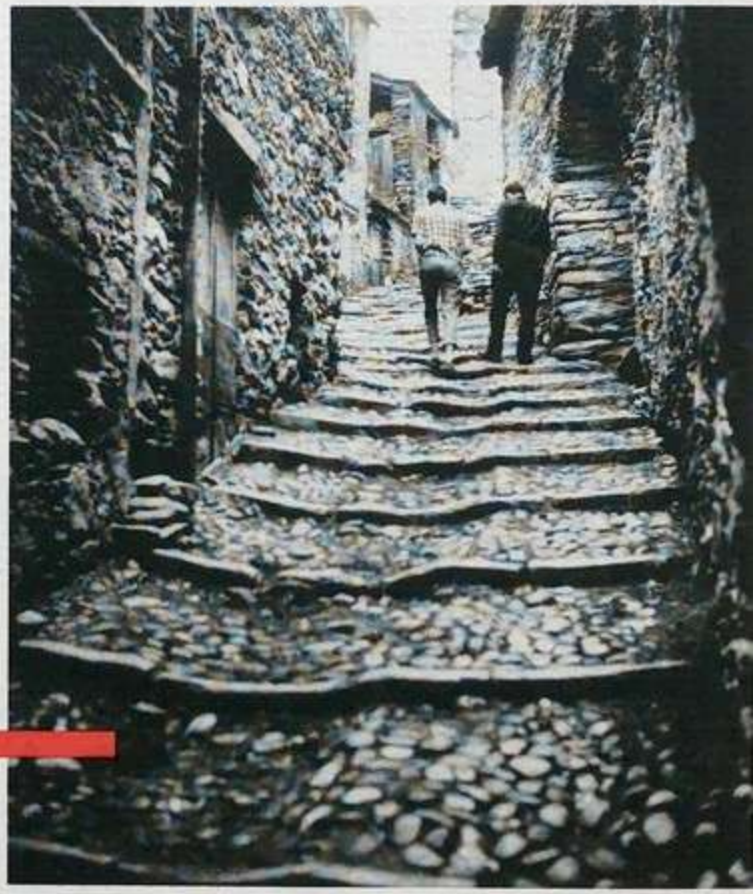
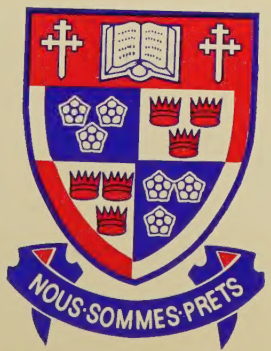
on the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time:

THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL

1957–1972



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
3 9345 01317285 7



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
W.A.C. BENNETT LIBRARY

NX 542 05 1989 c.2

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/onpassageoffewpe0000unse

the SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL

1957–1972

on the Passage

The exhibition was organized by Peter Wollen and Mark Francis, with Paul-Hervé Parsy, in consultation with Thomas Y. Levin, Greil Marcus, and Elisabeth Sussman

Elisabeth Sussman, Editor

Musée national d'art moderne
Centre Georges Pompidou
Paris, France
February 21, 1989 – April 9, 1989

Institute of Contemporary Arts
London, England
June 23, 1989 – August 13, 1989

The Institute of Contemporary Art
Boston, Massachusetts
October 20, 1989 – January 7, 1990

Published with the assistance of The Getty Grant Program and Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. Additional funding provided by the Lila Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund.

# of a few people through a rather brief moment in time:

THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL 1957–1972

The MIT Press
Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England

The Institute of Contemporary Art
Boston, Massachusetts

The exhibition *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International, 1957–1972* is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, and Association Française d'Action Artistique.

© 1989 Institute of Contemporary Art and Massachusetts Institute of Technology
© "It's All Over: The Material (and Anti-Material) Evidence" by Mark Francis
© "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International" by Peter Wollen

Publication of "Situationist Data (Chronology)" by permission of Editions Gérard Lebovici, Paris. Translation © Institute of Contemporary Art and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1989. Original French version appeared in Jean-Jacques Raspaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer, *L'Internationale situationniste: Chronologie/Bibliographie/Protagonistes (Avec un index de noms insultés)* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972).

Photographs of SI members taken at Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy, courtesy of Collection Jacqueline de Jong, Amsterdam, are by Ralph Rumney, London. Installation photographs, courtesy of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, were taken by Béatrice Hatala and Konstantinos Ignatiadis.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher.

This book was printed and bound in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

On the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time: the Situationist International, 1957–1972 / Elisabeth Sussman, editor.
p. cm.
"Exhibition was organized by Peter Wollen and Mark Francis, with Paul-Hervé Parsy, in consultation with Thomas Y. Levin, Greil Marcus, and Elisabeth Sussman."
"Dates of exhibition: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, February 21, 1989 – April 1989; ICA London, June 23, 1989 – ; ICA Boston, October 20, 1989 – January 7, 1990."
ISBN 0-262-23146-8
1. Internationale situationniste—Exhibitions. 2. Arts, Modern—20th century—Europe—Exhibitions. 3. Avant-garde (Aesthetics)—Europe—History—20th century—Exhibitions.
I. Sussman, Elizabeth, 1939- . II. Institute of Contemporary Art (Boston, Mass.) III. Musée national d'art moderne (France) IV. Institute of Contemporary Arts (London, England)
NX542.05 1989
700',9'045'074—dc20 89-14487
CIP

Contents

Preface vi
David A. Ross

Introduction 2
Elisabeth Sussman

It's All Over: The Material (and Anti-Material) Evidence 16
Mark Francis

Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International 20
Peter Wollen

Asger Jorn and the Situationist International 62
Troels Andersen

An Enormous and Unknown Chemical Reaction: The Experimental Laboratory in Alba 67
Mirella Bandini

Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord 72
Thomas Y. Levin

Guy Debord's *Mémoires*: A Situationist Primer 124
Greil Marcus

A Selection of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World 132
Selected and introduced by Greil Marcus, translated and annotated by Thomas Y. Levin

Situationist Data (Chronology) 176

Checklist of the Exhibition 189

Definitions 198

Preface

The great anxiety and dissonance evident in the art of our time is—to a great extent—the result of a shared awareness of what for lack of a better term can be described as a crisis in representation. That is to say, a critical condition marked by the fact that a certain kind of art has lost its power to affect the conditions that underlie modern life. This is often most poignant in failed art that attempts to probe problematic social conditions or societal attitudes. The power of capitalist culture to commodify, contain, and control these objects of cultural criticism is an impressive example of the pervasiveness of the problem. The inability to recognize the sustaining role played by the sympathetic representation of poverty as a form of economic "otherness" is but another example of the root of what Guy Debord called "the spectacle."

For many, this crisis in art literally defines the entire social environment in which we all live and work, and although this crisis has been compounded by our understanding of the pervasive nature of the problem itself, it is not likely to simply disappear or pass out of fashion. Quite predictably, there is a mourning for the lost innocence that ironically now defines all other art as somehow naive and childlike in its sheer hopefulness. There is also a great anger, as something has indeed been lost (or perhaps more properly I should say stolen), and yet it is exceedingly difficult to point to a specific culprit. We all killed Kennedy, as the saying goes.

Starting with this exhibition and catalogue, the Institute embarks on a series in which we will attempt to create a framework for the discussion and study of this complex crisis. We believe that these exhibitions will allow for a more thorough and profound engagement with the art of our time and will foster the development of the critical faculties necessary to come to terms with art that often seems purposefully opaque and essentially impenetrable. We firmly believe that an understanding of the nature of this crisis will open up the experience of this art to a far broader audience than that which now seems so immersed in it.

This first exhibition, *On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International, 1957–1972*, produced in collaboration with our colleagues at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, explores the impact of a small but extremely influential intellectual moment in recent European history—that of the Situationist International. The largely successful attempts of the Situationists to deny their "movement" the status that would transform it into either another art world "ism" or a simplistic ideological "point of view" has made the task of putting together the exhibition a formidable one. I believe that all involved have done a remarkable job in producing an exhibition that offered a unique museological challenge.

The curatorial conception for the exhibition was launched and developed by Mark Francis and Peter Wollen, with Paul-Hervé Parsy, in collaboration with

Thomas Y. Levin, Greil Marcus, and Elisabeth Sussman. The design of the exhibition was the work of Nigel Coates with Christophe Egret. The production of this catalogue was accomplished with the help of several individuals: William Bissell and Leslie Nolen, as editors; Leigh Raben, as general assistant; and Sylvia Steiner, as designer. Finally, the installation of the exhibition at The ICA was managed by Matthew Siegal. The curators, advisers, editors, and designers involved in the exhibition all deserve praise and our gratitude. Perhaps the difficulty of this exhibition should have been expected, since a probing of the intellectual core of not only the May 1968 student riots in Paris, but of the explosion of the kinds of dissent that have characterized international affairs since then was bound to be intricate and contentious. Regardless, in this year in which the world has loudly celebrated the bicentennial of the French Revolution as a historical event, it is our sincere hope that we will take the time to consider how art and the continuing impetus for revolution in fact intersects, and how that intersection often sets the tone and ultimately affects the outcome of revolution itself.

I would like to thank Jean-Hubert Martin, Director of the Museé national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, for his continued support of this exhibition project. Without funding from a special artistic initiative grant from The National Endowment for the Arts, and a generous grant from The Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities and the Association française d'action artistique, we would not have been able to organize or mount this exhibition. In addition, I am grateful to the artists, private collectors, and institutional lenders who have graciously allowed us to present the objects and documents combined within this remarkable exhibition. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the tremendous commitment and assistance of the many individuals who gave of their time so generously, and without whom this exhibition and catalogue could never have been realized:

Micky and Pierre Alechinsky
Troels Andersen
Kerstin Arcadius
Ed Ball
Mirella Bandini
William Bissell
Yve-Alain Bois
Flip Bool
Tim Burns
Mme. Laure de Buzon
Pierre-Simon Callot
Nigel Coates
Roger Conover
Adam Cornford
Isaac Cronin
Catherine Duruel
Caroline Eades
Christophe Egret
R. H. Fuchs
Piergiorgio Gallizio (G.N.A.)
Jean-Pierre George
Laurent Gervereau
Yves Gevaert
Anton and Annick Herbert
Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman
Bernard Huin
Pontus Hulten
Jacqueline de Jong
David Joselit
Alice Yeager Kaplan
Leandro Katz
King Mob
John Latham
Otto van de Loo
Isabelle Lorenz
Mme. Martano
Roddy Maude-Roxby
Miles
Ghislain Mollet-Vieville
Carlo Monzino
Stefano Moreni
Jörgen Nash
Giorgio Pinot-Gallizio
Jamie Reid
David Rodowick
Ralph Rumney
Michael Ryan
Juliet Saltzman
Helen Schlein
Christa Schubbe
Terrel Seltzer
Martine Silie
Sylvia Steiner
Hardy Strid
Patrick Talbot
Jens Jørgen Thorsen
Bernard Tschumi
Lawrence Watson
Tony Wilson
Peter Wollen
Maurice Wyckaert
Dr. Armin Zweite

Assorted Images, Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France; Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands; Museet i Halmstad, Halmstad, Sweden; Musée départemental des Vosges, Epinal, France; Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, Germany; Why Not Associates, London, UK
Also those who wish to remain anonymous.

David A. Ross, Director
The Institute of Contemporary Art

Acknowledgments

Trustees

Pamela Allara
Enid L. Beal
Michael Beauchemin*
Clark L. Bernard
Marty Cain*
Ann K. Collier
Ronald Druker
Sunny Dupree, Esq.
Charlene Engelhard-Troy
Gerald S. Fineberg
Niki Friedberg
Richard C. Garrison
Steven Grossman
John P. Hamill
Eloise W. Hodges*
Theodore Landsmark
James T. McBride
Stephen Mindich
James S. Plaut*
Michael Porter
Ellen Poss, M.D.
Randolfo Rocha
Marc Rosen
David A. Ross*
Karen Rotenberg
Thomas Segal
Robert A. Smith
Andrew Snider*
Roger P. Sonnabend
Steven J. Stadler
Donald Stanton
Steven Star
Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr.
David H. Thorne
Nancy B. Tieken
Lois B. Torf
Jeanne Wasserman
John Taylor Williams, Esq.
Samuel Yanes

*ex officio

Honorary Trustees

Herbert Agoos
Mrs. Nelson Aldrich
Lee A. Ault
Leonard Bernstein
Hyman Bloom
Lewis Cabot
John Coolidge
Mrs. Gardner Cox
Mrs. Harris Fahnestock
Lois Foster
Charles Goldman, Esq.
Graham Gund
Mr. and Mrs. Charles F. Hovey
Mrs. James F. Hunnewell
Louis I. Kane
William Lane
Jack Levine
Thomas Messer
Agnes Mongan
Maud Morgan
Stephen D. Paine
James S. Plaut, Chairman
Irving W. Rabb
Elizabeth Saltonstall
Dr. Arthur K. Solomon
William Wainwright
Mrs. Philip S. Weld
Mrs. Charles Withers

on the Passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time:

THE SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL

1957–1972

Introduction

Elisabeth Sussman

VIe CONGRES
DE L'INTER-
NATIONALE
SITUATION-
NISTE AN-
VERS DU 12
AU 15 NO-
VEMBRE 1962

ÉDITÉ PAR:
INTERNATIONALE
SITUATIONNISTE
B.P 75-06 PARIS

1.1
Poster, Sixth Congress of the Situationist International, from November 12th to 15th, 1962

The Situationist International (SI), the movement under discussion in this catalogue, remained from its inception intentionally underground, explicitly denied its own status as a movement, and resisted the art-world canonization suffered by earlier avant-garde movements such as dada. Nonetheless the Situationists achieved cult status in Europe during the late 1960s and 1970s as a result of the part they played in the events of 1967 and 1968 in France (fig. 1.1 and 1.2). Since then there has been a widespread diffusion of their ideas about society, art, and the relation between the two. Without falling prey to linear constructions of influence, it may still be claimed, as the thought of the Situationists becomes increasingly well known, that their impact has been absorbed in both the rhetoric and practice of contemporary cultural production. This impact has been both acknowledged (there was a limited dissemination of texts) as well as unacknowledged, insofar as the Situationists' ideas were spread through small-circulation publications rather than available through the official mass media or institutions.

The formally controversial claim that art is integrally linked to, not separate from, the social and political is now increasingly accepted. Just as, for example, new breakthroughs in science early in this century (the theory of relativity, the discovery of X rays) have been shown to have been a formative factor in the development of the new vision of cubism, and the experience of World War I integral to the development of dada, so too the development of the technologies of mechanical reproduction, that is, the rise of the mass media, has had dramatic ramifications for cultural production across a broad spectrum of media and texts throughout the twentieth century. This was the context of the work of the SI, a theoretical, political, and artistic avant-garde that articulated the status of the art work in what has been termed the age of

1.2
Down with the Spectacular-Commodity Society
Poster, 1968

capitalist alienation and technological mediation. Lived experience, they argued, had been transformed into spectacle, desire into consumption. By means of brash artistic practice and sustained theoretical innovations intended to subvert this condition, the Situationists proposed to transform what Guy Debord, in a prescient formulation, called "the society of the spectacle."

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Situationists believed that artists were in the best position to lead the way toward change, converting art from a precious, consumable object to a principle permeating daily life. Transformations would take place in quotidian, everyday uses of the city and its buildings, in a revitalization of art through a negation of its traditional values, and in a subversive appropriation of dominant, mass-media representations (film, advertising, newspapers, and so forth). The Situationists' statements and sense of action were poetically and politically powerful, while their theory found expression in an aphoristic, witty, anarchic argot that, when published, was interspersed with polemically employed purloined images.

On the Passage of a Few People through a Rather Brief Moment in Time: The Situationist International, 1957–1972, as an exhibition and a publication, reveals a largely unknown context for an understanding of contemporary cultural practice that in many ways has been informed by the work of the Situationists. At the same time, we have sought to bring to light the Situationists' history, which is simultaneously utopian and fantastically irreverent. The texts by the authors of this catalogue provide readings of Situationist ideas, their development and their articulation in various practices (both artistic and political) across the fifteen year span of the official life of the movement. The conceptual work and artistic production of the Situationists (predominantly from 1957 to 1962) form the core of the exhibition this book accompanies.

A seemingly secondary but in fact central body of SI material—their graphic output in books, posters, comics, and the journal *Internationale situationniste*, all relying on appropriated and recontextualized texts and images—are gathered and presented together as a whole for the first time in the exhibition. Certain key texts (selected by Greil Marcus) have been newly translated and annotated (by Thomas Y. Levin) for this volume, and, in one case, "The World of Which We Speak," presented in its original layout with its original illustrations. The films of Guy Debord were withdrawn from circulation in 1984 by their creator, who has forbidden that they be screened during his lifetime. Although these key Situationist works are therefore not available for presentation in the exhibition, they are dealt with at length in the catalogue by Thomas Y. Levin. This study of Situationist cinema, the first ever published on this aspect of Debord's creative output, discusses the films, their context, and their significance for postwar avant-garde cinema. Both the exhibition and the publication also focus on how the SI surfaced in the events of 1967 and 1968 in France, when their call for a revolution in everyday life reached both the established Left and politically unaffiliated students. The exhibition and catalogue also map the influence of Situationist ideas on later groups and figures, including, for example, the progenitors of punk, the Sex Pistols. Fashioned by Malcolm McLaren with Jamie Reid and Johnny Rotten, the Sex Pistols' radical records and concert presence (and the appropriated and "detourned" mass-media imagery of their record covers and posters, designed by Jamie Reid) gave new voice to certain aspects of the Situationist project (fig. 1.3 and 1.4).

It is the goal of this publication to expand the story of the Situationists beyond a simple recital of their key ideas. To this end, it is necessary to trace the main figures and movements that gave birth to the SI. The Situationists were linked to earlier avant-garde movements, including both dada and surrealism. Like the dadaists, the Situationists thought of art as action, as idea, as a vehicle for change rather than as a commodity. Like the surrealists, the Situationists desired a fundamental change in consciousness and sought to liberate and reorder everyday life. In addition, like

1.3
Jamie Reid
Sex Pistols Mural, 1983
Installation photograph,
Musée national d'art moderne,
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989

Detail.
Jamie Reid for the Sex Pistols
Photo courtesy Assorted Images Ltd.

1.4
Jamie Reid
She Came, She Stooped, She Conquered, 1982

both dada and surrealism, the Situationist movement linked artists from many European centers, and manifestos, events, and publications were defining elements of group actions. Specific relationships between the Situationists and surrealism are described in Peter Wollen's essay, which provides a detailed intellectual genealogy of the movement in the context of twentieth-century political and artistic avant-gardes, while the connections between dada and Situationist cinema are explored in Thomas Y. Levin's text. The more immediate predecessors of the SI included such avant-garde movements as the Lettrists, a group of artists located in Paris from 1945, who made the letter the central element in painting, poetry, and music, and developed an experimental "enlarged" cinema; the Lettrist International (Paris, 1952–1957), a splinter group led by Debord; and another short-lived movement known as the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (MIBI). Other members of the SI had belonged to COBRA, a group of artists from Copenhagen, Brussels, and Amsterdam.

The SI expanded and contracted over its history, and its various permutations can be followed in the chronology of this book. The best-known members of the SI in its early years were the French theorist and filmmaker Guy Debord; the former COBRA artists Asger Jorn and Constant; and the Italian artist Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio. Greil

1.5
Jacqueline de Jong
Jack the Ripper, 1964

1.6
Michèle Bernstein

Marcus, in his contribution to this catalogue, captures the milieu from which the Situationists developed as conveyed through the Debord/Jorn book, *Mémoires*; the Situationist involvement of Jorn and Pinot-Gallizio are detailed by Troels Andersen and Mirella Bandini. Other artists who were Situationists included the members of the German group SPUR, as well as Jörgen Nash, Ralph Rumney, Maurice Wyckaert, J.V. Martin, and Jacqueline de Jong (fig. 1.5). Important Situationists alongside Guy Debord whose contributions were primarily textual and theoretical were Michèle Bernstein (fig. 1.6), Attila Kotányi, Raoul Vaneigem, and René Viénet.

It is reductive and misleading to enumerate SI concepts out of context, but the briefest summaries, in the Situationists' own words, may prove helpful (see also "Definitions" at the end of this catalogue). Debord, in his 1967 study *Society of the Spectacle*, articulates as follows his principal thesis: "The spectacle is the moment when the commodity has attained the 'total occupation' of social life. Not only is the relation to the commodity visible but it is all one sees: the world one sees is its world."[1] The artist must revitalize this condition of everyday life through a transformation of its signs and gestures; in a 1957 essay, Debord had called for the "construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality."[2]

As detached statements, the ideas of the SI only partially deliver their impact. To be fully appreciated they must be seen in the context in which many of them first appeared, the journal *Internationale situationniste* (published from 1958 to 1969). Here their utopian, subversive effect is achieved by interweaving text in irreverent juxtaposition to appropriated images—ads, provocative pictures of women, comic strips, views of cities, photos of the group, current newspaper photos, scientific charts, and diagrams. *Détournement* ("diversion") was another key means of restructuring culture and experience that entered the Situationist lexicon from Lettrism and the Lettrist International. *Détournement* proposes a violent excision of elements—painting, architecture, literature, film, urban sites, sounds, gestures, words, signs—from their original contexts, and a consequent destabilization and recontextualization through rupture and realignment. As Debord and fellow Lettrist International member Gil J Wolman wrote in 1956, "The literary and artistic heritage of humanity should be used for partisan propaganda purposes. It is of course necessary to go beyond any idea of scandal. Since the negation of the bourgeois conception of art and artistic genius has become pretty much old hat, [Duchamp's] drawing of a mustache on the *Mona Lisa* is no more interesting than the original version of that painting. We now must push this process to the point of negating the negation."[3]

Other key Situationist ideas (*dérive*, unitary urbanism, and psychogeography), again originating with the Lettrist International, were further developed in the first years of the Situationist movement and pertain directly to everyday life in the city. These words, which relate conceptually to the theory of situations and *détournement*, may have a hollow ring to them now when civic and architectural idealism seems to have been totally absorbed by commerce. But at the time, their force drove certain artists into the streets and turned the streets into an arena for art and politics. *Dérive* ("drift") was defined as "a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances."[4] Psychogeography meant "the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals."[5] Unitary urbanism, as explained by Attila Kotányi and Raoul Vaneigem in 1961, was ". . . a living critique, fueled by all the tensions of daily life, of this manipulation of cities and their inhabitants. Living critique means the setting up of bases for an experimental life, the coming together of those creating their own lives on terrains equipped to their ends."[6]

While this catalogue records a particular reconstruction of the Situationist movement, the exhibition itself represents a more complex paradox that Mark Francis addresses in his essay for this volume. The idea for the exhibition was first proposed by Mark Francis and Peter Wollen, who were then both working in Britain, but who, at the time of this writing, were respectively Adjunct Curator at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, and Professor in the Cinema Studies Program at UCLA. At an early stage, they approached The ICA in Boston and we decided to become partners in the co-production of the exhibition. David Joselit and I, working as co-curators supported by ICA Director David Ross, had proposed to do a series of exhibitions on the relation between art and everyday life, in which, we decided, an exhibition on the Situationists would be an essential component. We enlisted the help of Greil Marcus, who was in the process of publishing the first American study on the Situationists and related artists, and subsequently of Thomas Y. Levin, a scholar at Yale University who was working on Situationist cinema. The outline plan for the exhibition was formulated at a meeting in Boston in February 1988, and with the support of Jean-Hubert Martin, Director of the Centre Georges Pompidou, it was then agreed that the exhibition would open in Paris. Paul-Hervé Parsy, Chief Curator at the Centre Pompidou, became involved with Francis and Wollen in the realization of the exhibition. Nigel Coates and Christophe Egret of the architectural firm of Branson, Coates joined the curators in Paris to solve the difficult questions surrounding the modes of presentation of the material. A decision was made to conceive of each site—in different museums and in different countries—as a new installation, in which the core of the exhibition would remain the same, while the presentation would, by necessity, change according to each new context. Iwona Blazwick, as the curator of the third site, The ICA, London, then joined the group to plan the British venue.

The conundrum facing the curators was that the essential Situationist position after 1962 consisted of critique, proposal, and direct action. It was only in the early stage of the movement, approximately 1957 through 1962, that material objects—books, paintings, drawings, models, maps—actually embodied the notions of the transformations of culture and everyday life central to the group, though the journal continued to be an effective visual and theoretical vehicle. After 1962, Guy Debord and those around him actively refused and negated the concept of art as a separate, exhibitable enterprise. As Raoul Vaneigem said in 1961 at the fifth conference of the SI in Göteborg, Sweden: "It is a question not of elaborating the spectacle of refusal, but rather of refusing the spectacle. In order for their elaboration to be artistic in the new and authentic sense defined by the SI, the elements of the destruction of the spectacle must precisely cease to be works of art. There is no such thing as situationism or a situationist work of art. Once and for all.

1.7
Gordon Matta-Clark
Humphrey Street Splitting, 1974
Englewood, New Jersey
Photo courtesy Holly Solomon Gallery, New York

. . . Our position is that of combatants between two worlds—one that we don't acknowledge, the other that does not yet exist."[7]

Limiting the exhibition to only the "exhibitable" art of the early period, however, would present only a partial view of the movement, which extended for over another decade: it would misrepresent, lessen, and diffuse its historic interest. In the exhibition (and, to some extent, in this catalogue) we have chosen to convey the broader historic cultural impact of the Situationists through the inclusion of statements from primary sources, the striking graphics of the journal, the printed ephemera of May 1968 in Paris, and documentary photographs. The act of presenting any Situationist material (from the beginning as well as from the whole duration of the movement) might be considered tantamount to incarceration, commodifying the theory (and its attendant objects) the basic underlying rhetoric of which contained the most forceful anti-commodification critique of the mid twentieth century. These apparent contradictions are unavoidable and must be confronted in order to adequately present (and in a sense spectacularize) these ideas and materials. We have therefore been sparing about the use in the museum of the apparatus of interpretation, narrative, and display, relying instead on the catalogue to provide the major interpretative framework.

It is not the point of this catalogue or exhibition to trace strict lines of influence back to a single source—the Situationist movement—but perhaps to subscribe to the Situationist slogan, "Our ideas are in everybody's head and one day they'll come out."[8] Elsewhere in this book, Mark Francis refers to a number of European artists—Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Art & Language, Mario Merz, and Jamie Reid—who were aware of the Situationist project. But Situationist ideas have also been felt in a broader spectrum of cultural practice in North America and Europe in the 1970s and 1980s by individuals who did not necessarily know of the Situationists nor had necessarily read any of their texts. Without in any way privileging visual (or North American) artists out of a larger group, it can still be stipulated (from an American perspective) that there has been a confrontation with the politics of the spectacle (by way of the *dérive* and *détournement*) in a large and variegated body of artistic work. In the 1970s, we could classify the architectural interventions of Gordon Matta-Clark (fig. 1.7) and the spectacle-address of Dan Grahams's pavillions and cinema projects as quasi-Situationist in character. More recently, Robert Longo's performances have dealt with the powerful hollowness of media image divorced from content. Jenny Holzer's message-machines, plaques, and posters distributed in the city mimic and undermine the banalities of public address (fig. 1.8). Krzysztof Wodiczko's projections

1.8
Jenny Holzer
Selections from TRUISMS, 1982
Spectacolor Board
Times Square, New York
Photo courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York

1.9
Barbara Kruger
Untitled (We Don't Need Another Hero), 1986
Berkeley, CA

of dissonant images on buildings and monuments have been described as "subversive spectacles toward the signs of political power."[9]

In fact, there is a wide group of varied artists to whom the issue of commodification and the consumption of images is central. Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Richard Prince, and Cindy Sherman (to name only four) all use different strategies to attain this purpose. Kruger lifts photographs out of the mass media, enlarges them, and then in billboard fashion plasters on them statements that reveal the political implications of the representation (fig. 1.9). Sherman simultaneously adopts and dismantles the sexist conventions of film noir and fashion photography in photographs of her own fabrication in which she figures as protagonist (fig. 1.10). Richard Prince presents unaltered photographs from mass media advertising that, when recontextualized as museum "readymades," reveal the unspoken myths and stereotypes of American culture (fig. 1.11). All of these gestures rely upon a reading of the world of representations in mass culture that recognizes the form of control that resides in the world of images and upon an aesthetic strategy that operates by wresting an image or a form of language from its original context and subverting it by methods of re-presentation in a different context.

1.10
Cindy Sherman
Untitled Film Still, 1979
Photo courtesy Metro Pictures, New York

1.11
Richard Prince
Untitled (cowboys), 1981
Photo courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York

Notes

Is it too cynical to bypass the obvious problem that exists today in connecting Situationist theory with recent cultural practice, since much of the latter is problematically ambiguous, existing simultaneously as both critical manifesto and the very commodity it critiques? To a greater or lesser extent the visual artists mentioned above constitute their work outside as well as inside the marketplace, using the vehicles of site-specific installation, temporary projects, and writing to attempt to set forth the social instrumentality of their work. However, Situationist assumptions, as we continue to experience them, go far beyond the art world. It could be argued, perhaps, that these assumptions operate in the mass media itself (part of the spectacle within a strictly Situationist perspective) in the vehicles of pop, mainstream film productions—we need only mention the witty subversion of the power of the image in the recent film *They Live*. What this publication is intended to do is present for scrutiny a body of work, by the choice of its authors mostly without provenance, that proposes a crucial context for many aspects of the refigured practice of late-twentieth-century culture.

1. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1970, repr. 1977 and 1983), p. 42.

2. Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action," excerpted in Ken Knabb, ed. and trans., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 23; originally published as *Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendence situationniste internationale* (Paris, n. p., 1957).

3. Guy Debord and Gil J Wolman, "Methods of Detournement," in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 9; originally published as "Mode d'emploi du détournement," in *Les lèvres nues* 8 (May 1956).

4. "Definitions" in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 45; originally published as "Definitions," in *Internationale situationniste* 1 (June 1958). A reprint of this text can be found at the end of the catalogue.

5. Ibid.

6. Attila Kotányi and Raoul Vaneigem, "Elementary Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism," in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 66; originally published as "Programme elementaire du bureau d'urbanisme unitaire," in *Internationale situationniste* 6 (August 1961).

7. "The Fifth S.I. Conference in Göteborg (excerpts)," in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 88; originally published as "La cinquième conférence de L'I.S. à Göteborg, in *Internationale situationniste* 7 (April 1962).

8. Ronald Fraser et al., *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), p. 84.

9. Ewa Lajor-Burcharth, "Urban Disturbance," *Art in America* (November 1987), p. 151. For a discussion of Longo in this context, see Hal Foster, "Contemporary Art and Spectacle," in his *Recodings* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), p. 79. For Cindy Sherman and others, see Edward Ball, "The Beautiful Language of My Century," *Arts* 63 (January 1989), pp. 65–73 [Due to editorial error, this issue of *Arts* was mistakenly printed as *Arts* 65, no. 5 (January 1988) and may be catalogued as such—ED]. For Buren and Art & Language, see *Artscribe International* 66 (November-December 1987). Other articles on the Situationists have appeared in *Artscribe* (John Miller, "The Consumption of Everyday Life," in the January-February 1988 issue), in the issue of *Arts* cited above, and in *Block* 14 (Autumn 1988).

It's All Over:

The Material (and Anti-Material) Evidence

Mark Francis

In the archives of the Silkeborg Museum in Denmark can be found a handwritten note entitled "Plan générale de la Bibliothèque situationniste de Silkeborg." It lists clearly, with sections and subsections (pre-Situationist/Situationist/historical/copies), the items that were printed and produced by the members of the Situationist International (SI) before the group's formation in 1957 and during the first four years of its existence. The note is dated 10 March 1961 and initialled "G.D." Almost all the items listed by Guy Debord were given by him to the museum's archive, and the basic collection has been supplemented by Asger Jorn's own collection, as well as by gifts from Guy Atkins, Jorn's biographer, and others.

Here the trajectory of the group can be reconstructed—the "passage de quelques personnes" that we have plagiarized for the title of this exhibition and book (fig. 2.1).[1] Two aspects of the discovery of these notes seem apposite to any remarks about the intentions and purposes of an exhibition such as this. The first is the very existence of this archive in the "public domain" and the fact that it is clearly intended for research purposes; the second is its clear and even dialectical method of organization (e.g., "section III, division B: anti-Situationist polemics"). It lent credence to our supposition that putting together and presenting the collection of models, films, tracts, art works, books, and leaflets that were issued in the name of the SI or that specifically used the strategies they developed, such as the *Modifications* of Jorn (fig. 3.3) or the industrial painting of Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, could and should be attempted. The publications of the SI, even after 1961, such as the books comprising the Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie on Constant, Pinot-Gallizio, *Le long voyage de Jorn et Wemaëre*, and Debord's *Contre le cinéma*, can of course be found in many public domains, and indeed the facsimile collected edition of the original twelve issues of the SI journal, *Internationale situationniste*, is itself still in print and readily available.[2] On the other hand, many of the works of art had disappeared from view and are now almost forgotten.

2.1
Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy, 1957
L to R: Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, Piero Simondo, Elena Verrone, Michèle Bernstein, Guy Debord, Asger Jorn, Walter Olmo

Such was the fate, for example, of the *Caverna dell'antimateria* of Pinot-Gallizio, which was originally installed at the Galerie René Drouin on rue Visconti, Paris in May 1959, and hardly ever seen since. It has not been shown in public for fifteen years, the last time being the retrospective of Pinot-Gallizio in Turin in 1974.

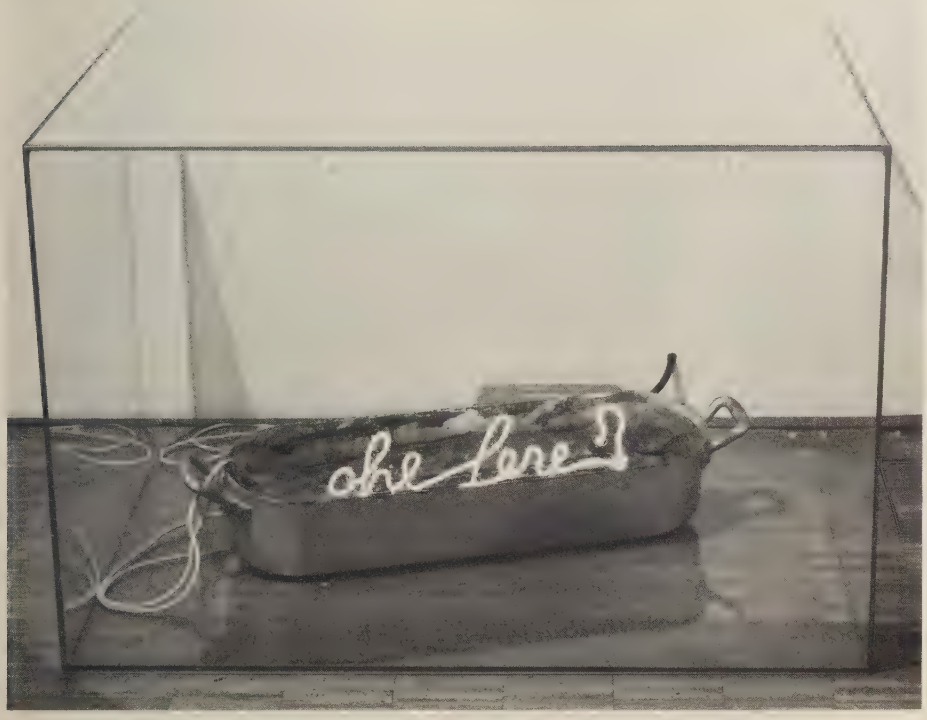
When Peter Wollen and I started to discuss the possibilities and justifications for an exhibition about the SI some years ago, we did not anticipate the plethora of references to the SI and its role in more or less well-known public events over the last twenty or more years that have subsequently appeared. The all-pervasive "society of the spectacle," as predicted by Debord in 1967, has been accompanied, as if by a specter at the feast of consumption, by acknowledgements to the concept of *détournement* and the spectacle in all departments of the culture industry—from the art, art historical, and architectural press to the fanzines and clubs of pop music, at least since the mid-1970s onward.

Doubtless the exhibition will also be seen to contribute to this accumulation of "mediatized" images. But while the members of the SI themselves recognized as early as the fifth conference in Göteborg in August 1961 that their ideas would be claimed by others and put to uses directly contrary to those intended, it can also be claimed that this is what they themselves had done with pre-existing images and texts.[3] Copyrights are legal proscriptions absolutely opposed to the distributive principles of potlatch and plagiarism, which had first been elaborated by the Lettrist International. The only way to proceed then, for us, thirty years after the foundation of the SI at Cosio d'Arroscia, was not to consider their *passage* a closed chapter nor to be deflected by the lenses of another place, another time. While it is inevitable that later attempts to reflect upon these matters are a commentary, we may aspire also to be one of the *études objectives* prefigured in Debord's note of 1961, insofar as we have exhibited only the original documents and projects.

The key concepts of *dérive, détournement,* and *urbanism unitaire,* as well as the construction of *situations,* were all elaborated before the nominal foundation of the SI in 1957. The concept of spectacle, and especially the potential role of cinema working against its "accumulation of images," was developed throughout the 1960s. It has become a part of the mythology surrounding the SI that the theory only became a reality in the period 1967–1968, but we can now see how their principles were clarified and reformulated in the light of works first produced in the late 1950s—in the collaborative books *Fin de Copenhague, Mémoires,* and *Stavrim, Sonetter,* in the experiments of industrial painting and the *Modifications,* even perhaps in the expectations that one can imagine were entertained for the ambiance of La Méthode, the café-bar on rue Descartes that was planned by Michèle Bernstein and Guy Debord in 1958 that only lasted a few weeks.

How can these objects, events, journeys, and stunts still signify after a historical gap of twenty or thirty years? The problem here is substantially more acute than the standard museological problem of recontextualizing historical material. Like radio currents, the Situationist concepts have been emitted and remain alive but invisible until picked up by a receiver. Tuned to the right wavelength, the message can be transmitted. Our approach then, as a result of our research in Paris, Silkeborg, Amsterdam, Alba, Turin, Munich, London, New York, and Los Angeles, was to organize the material into coherent sections. These are specifically those concepts of (1) *détournement* (demonstrated by the paintings of Asger Jorn, the films of Debord and René Viénet, and the comic strips and photographs "detourned" in Bertrand and Joannès's *Retour de la colonne Durutti*); (2) *dérive* and psychogeography (shown by Ralph Rumney's Venice photo-collage, Debord's *Guide psychogéographique de Paris* and *Naked City* map [fig. 8.1], and J. V. Martin's *Golden Fleet* constructions [fig. 8.6]); (3) rolls of *pittura industriale* and the *Cavern of Anti-Matter* of Pinot-Gallizio (fig. 3.4, 3.14, and 5.2); (4) unitary urbanism (Constant's *New Babylon* models, drawings, and maps); and (5) the tracts and posters produced by the Council for the Maintenance of the Occupations at the Sorbonne in May 1968 (which included some of the Situationists).

All this implied a chronological trajectory articulated in spacial terms—a simple and comprehensive organization of objects as the Bibliothèque in Silkeborg had indicated and indeed made imperative. What we have sought to do is not to reconstruct time past but to expose to the light things that have run the risk of acquiring the patina of nostalgia and the glamour of neglect.



2.2
Mario Merz
Che Fare? (What Is to Be Done?)
1968

The exhibition concludes with some indications—obviously not exhaustive—of the areas in which the ideas articulated by the SI have penetrated: in urbanism, among artists and radical political groups, and during the short-lived eruption of punk. While the SI material is arranged according to sense, there is also a diachronic structure, corresponding to the Experimental Laboratory period (centered—if at all—in Alba), the detonator period (which refers to Debord's statement that he provided the explosive machinery that ignited in May 1968), and the fallout period (after the SI disbanded in 1972). In this last section are included works by Marcel Broodthaers, Mario Merz (fig. 2.2), Daniel Buren, and Art & Language, who all had some contact with the SI, various items by Jamie Reid, including the Sex Pistols mural (fig. 1.3), and from Tony Wilson's Factory Records, including the sandpaper album cover of Vini Reilly's group, the Durutti Column. Jamie Reid had designed Christopher Gray's *Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International* while working at the *Suburban Press* in Croyden. Both he and Tony Wilson have explicitly made use of Situationist tactics and diversions.

Over these thirty years what has changed? Everything, and yet nothing. *Tout reste à faire.* To visualize the problems that remain unresolved and to see how the hopes and aspirations of those few people who were closely involved with the SI are still unfulfilled and indeed continually inverted, one might try to compare the ambiance of the Hacienda Club in Manchester, open for business since the late 1970s, with the imaginary *hacienda* dreamt of by Ivan Chtcheglov (alias Gilles Ivain) in his "Formula for a New Urbanism." In this text of 1953, the distance between delirious dream and spectacular reality can be practically measured.[4] It should be clear that the spectacle is always with us, and the urgency of transforming the relations of everyday life, work, and art into a continuous spontaneity can never be left to others.

Notes

1. "Plagiarism is necessary. Progress implies it" is one of the aphorisms Guy Debord lifted from Lautréamont in the proto-Situationist period.

2. The full run of the SI journal in a facsimile edition, *Internationale situationniste, 1958–69* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1975) is available through Editions Gérard Lebovici, 27, rue Saint Sulpice, 75006, Paris. They have also recently published Jean-François Marios, *Histoire de l'Internationale situationniste* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1989).

3. See *Internationale situationniste* 7 (April 1962), pp. 25–31.

4. "Maintenant c'est joué. L'Hacienda, tu ne la verras pas. Elle n'existe pas. Il faut construire l'Hacienda" (Gilles Ivain, "Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau," *Internationale situationniste* 1 [June 1958], p. 15).

BITTER VICTORY:

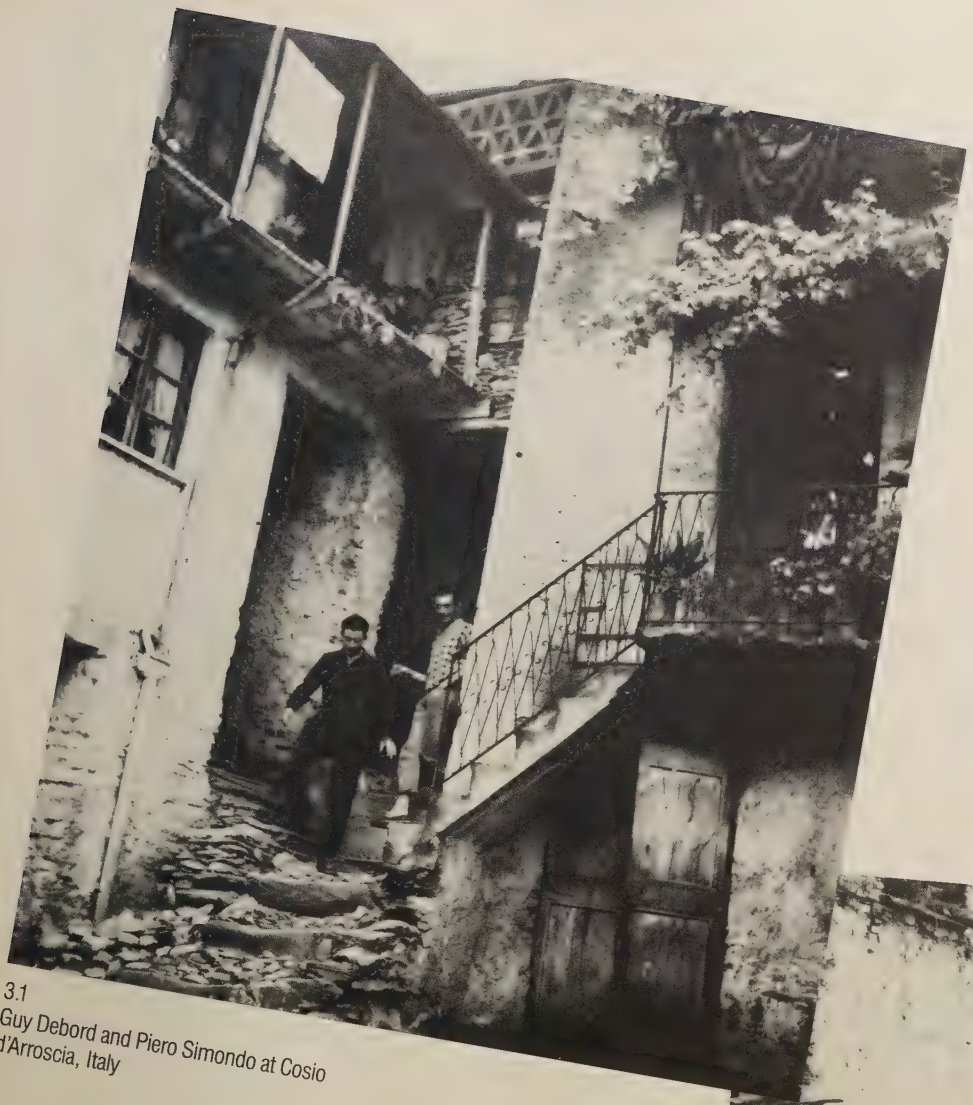
The Art and Politics of the Situationist International

Peter Wollen

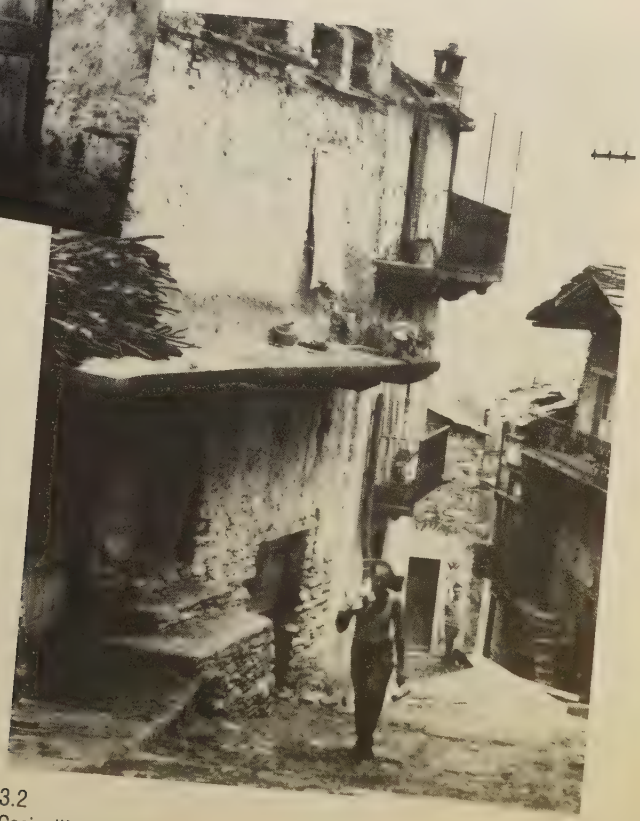
I

De Sade liberated from the Bastille in 1789, Baudelaire on the barricades in 1848, Courbet tearing down the Vendôme Column in 1870—French political history is distinguished by a series of glorious and legendary moments that serve to celebrate the convergence of popular revolution with art in revolt. In the twentieth century avant-garde artistic movements took up the banner of revolution consciously and enduringly. The political career of André Breton and the surrealists began with their manifestos against the Moroccan war (the Riff war) in 1925 and persisted through to the "Manifesto of the 121," which Breton signed in 1960 six years before his death, denouncing the Algerian war and justifying resistance. In May 1968 the same emblematic role was enacted once again by the militants of the Situationist International (SI).

The SI was founded in 1957 at Cosio d'Arroscia in northern Italy (fig. 3.1 and 3.2), principally out of the union of two prior avant-garde groups, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (MIBI, consisting of Asger Jorn, Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, and others) and the Lettrist International (LI, led by Guy Debord).[1] MIBI itself originated from splits in the postwar COBRA group of artists, which Jorn had helped found, and the SI was soon joined by another key COBRA artist, Constant. The ancestry of both COBRA and Lettrism can be traced back to the international surrealist movement, whose breakup after the war led to a proliferation of new splinter groups and an accompanying surge of new experimentation and position taking.[2] The SI brought together again many of



3.1
Guy Debord and Piero Simondo at Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy



3.2
Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy

the dispersed threads that signalled the decay and eventual decomposition of surrealism. In many ways, its project was that of relaunching surrealism on a new foundation, stripped of some of its elements (emphasis on the unconscious, quasi-mystical and occultist thinking, cult of irrationalism) and enhanced by others, within the framework of cultural revolution.

In its first phase (1957–1962) the SI developed a number of ideas that had originated in the LI, of which the most significant were those of *urbanisme unitaire* ("unitary urbanism," integrated city-creation), psychogeography, play as free and creative activity, *dérive* ("drift"), and *détournement* ("diversion," semantic shift).[3] The SI expounded its position in its journal, *Internationale situationniste*, brought out books, and embarked on a number of artistic activities. Artists were to break down the divisions between individual art forms and to create *situations*, constructed encounters and creatively lived moments in specific urban settings, instances of a critically transformed everyday life. They were to produce settings for situations and experimental models of possible modes of transformation of the city, as well as to agitate and polemicize against the sterility and oppression of the actual environment and ruling economic and political system.[4]

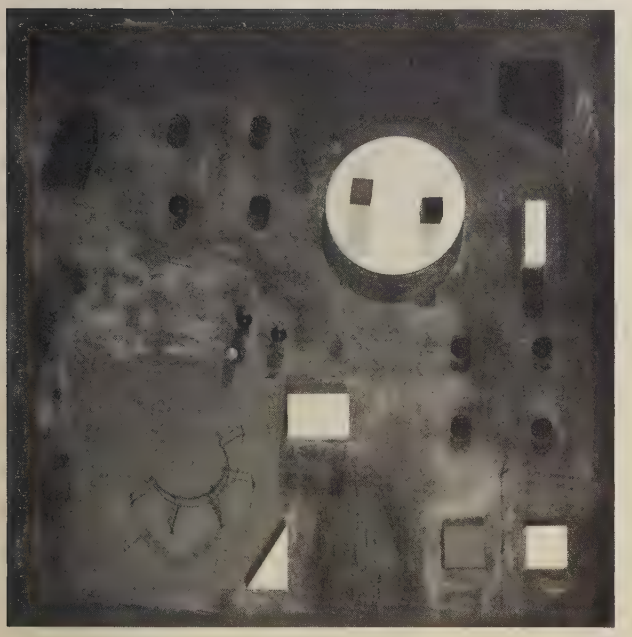
During this period a number of prominent painters and artists from many European countries joined the group, and became involved in the activities and publications of the SI. With members from Algeria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, and Sweden, the SI became a genuinely international movement, held together organizationally by annual conferences (1957—Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy; 1958—Paris, France; 1959—Munich, Germany; 1960—London, England; 1961—Göteborg, Sweden; 1962—Antwerp, Belgium) and by the journal, which was published once or twice a year in Paris by an editorial committee that changed over time and represented the different national sections.[5]

From the point of view of art, 1959 was an especially productive (or should one say, dialectically destructive?) year. Three artists held major exhibitions of their work. Asger Jorn showed his *Modifications* (*peintures détournées,* altered paintings) (fig. 3.3) at the Rive Gauche gallery in Paris.[6] These were over-paintings by Jorn on secondhand canvases by unknown painters, which he bought in flea markets or the like, transforming them by this double inscription. The same year Pinot-Gallizio held a show of his *Caverna dell'antimateria* (Cavern of anti-matter) at the Galerie René Drouin.[7] This was the culmination of his experiments with *pittura industriale* (fig. 3.4)—rolls of canvas up to 145 meters in length, produced mainly by hand, but also with the aid of painting machines and spray guns with special resins devised by Pinot-Gallizio himself (he had been a chemist before he became a painter, linking the two activities under Jorn's encouragement). The work was draped all around the gallery and Pinot-Gallizio also sold work by the meter by chopping lengths off the roll. His painting of this period was both a "diverted" parody of automation (which the SI viewed with hostile concern) and a prototype of vast rolls of "urbanist" painting that could engulf whole cities. Later in 1959 Constant exhibited a number of his *ilôts-maquettes* (model precincts) (fig. 3.5) at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.[8] These were part of his ongoing *New Babylon* project, inspired by unitary

3.3
Asger Jorn
Conte du nord, 1959

3.4
Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Caverna dell'antimateria
(Cavern of Anti-Matter), 1959

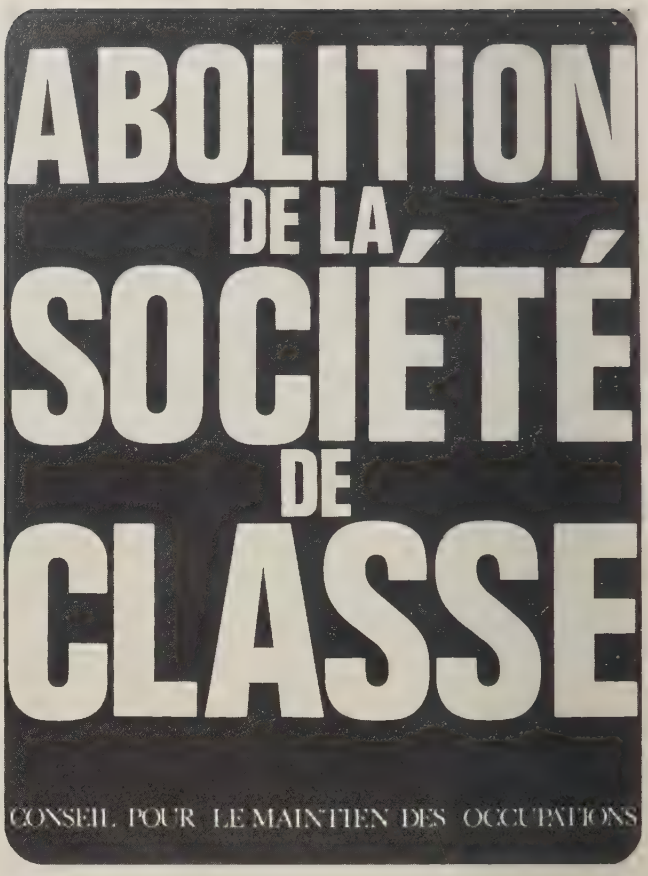
3.5
Constant
Ambiance de jeu
(Environment for Play), 1956



urbanism—the design of an experimental utopian city with changing zones for free play, whose nomadic inhabitants could collectively choose their own climate, sensory environment, organization of space, and so on.

During this period, however, a series of internal disagreements arose inside the organization that finally culminated in a number of expulsions and a split in 1962, when a rival Second Situationist International was set up by Jörgen Nash (Asger Jorn's younger brother) and joined by others from the Dutch, German, and Scandinavian sections. In broad terms, this can be characterized as a split between artists and political theorists (or revolutionaries). The main issue at stake was the insistence of the theoretical group based around Debord in Paris that art could not be recognized as a separate activity with its own legitimate specificity, but must be dissolved into a unitary revolutionary praxis.[9] After the split the SI was reformed and centralized around a main office in Paris. Up to 1967, the journal continued to appear annually, but only one more conference was held (1966, in Paris).

During the first, art-oriented phase of the SI, Debord worked with Jorn on collective art books and also made two films, *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (1959) and *Critique de la séparation* (1961).[10] Debord's future orientation can already be clearly seen in the second of these films, which makes a distinct break from the assumptions of the first. Debord had been auditing a university class taught by the Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre; subsequently he began to collaborate with the revolutionary *Socialisme ou barbarie* group and issued a joint manifesto in 1960 with its leading theorist, Cornelius



3.6
Abolition de la société de classe
(Abolition of Class Society)
Poster, 1968

Castoriadis. Fairly rapidly, his political and theoretical positions clarified and sharpened to the point where a split was inevitable.

After 1962 Debord assumed an increasingly central role in the SI, surrounded by a new generation of militants who were not professional artists. The earlier artistic goals and projects either fell away or were transposed into an overtly political (and revolutionary) register within a unitary theoretical system. In 1967 Debord published his magnum opus, *Society of the Spectacle,*[11] a lapidary totalization of Situationist theory that combined the Situationist analysis of culture and society within the framework of a theoretical approach and terminology drawn from Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (published in France by the *Arguments* group of ex-Communists who left the party after 1956)[12] and the political line of council communism, characteristic of *Socialisme ou barbarie* but distinctively recast by Debord.[13] In this book, Debord described how capitalist societies, East and West (state and market) complemented the increasing fragmentation of everyday life, including labor, with a nightmarishly false unity of the "spectacle," passively consumed by the alienated workers (in the broadest possible sense of noncapitalists and nonbureaucrats). Not until they became conscious (in the totalizing Lukácsian sense) of their own alienation could and would they rise up to liberate themselves and institute an anti-statist dictatorship of the proletariat in which power was democratically exercised by autonomous workers' councils.

Society of the Spectacle is composed in an aphoristic style, drawing on the philosophical writings of Hegel and

the polemical tropes of the young Marx, and it continues to extol *détournement* (and the obligation to plagiarize) but, in general, it is a theoretical work without artistic pretensions. This did not mean, however, that the Situationists had retreated from all forms of action other than the elaboration of theory. The previous winter a student uprising at the University of Strasbourg, one of a wave sweeping across the world, had been specifically inspired by the SI and had based its political activity on Situationist theory.[14] The next year, of course, 1968, saw the great revolutionary uprising, first of students, then of workers, which threatened to topple the de Gaulle regime. Here again student groups were influenced by the SI, especially at Nanterre where the uprising took shape, and the Situationists themselves played an active role in the events, seeking to encourage and promote workers' councils (and a revolutionary line within them) without exercising powers of decision and execution or political control of any kind (fig. 3.6).[15]

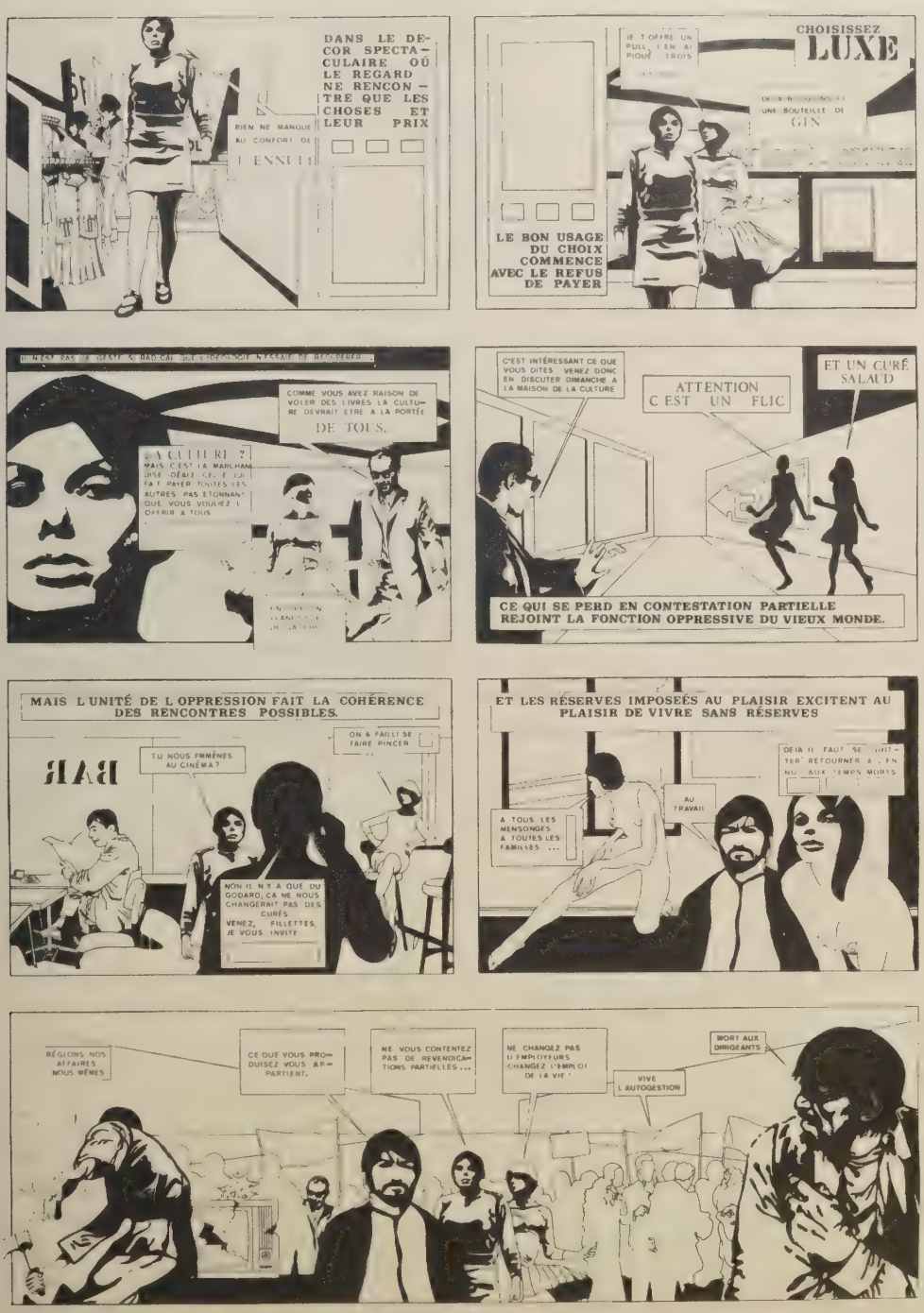
The year 1968 marked both the zenith of SI activity and success and also the beginning of its rapid decline. In 1969 one more issue of the journal was published and that same year the last conference was held in Venice. Further splits followed, and in 1972 the organization was dissolved. For the Situationists 1968 proved a bitter victory. Indeed, ironically, their contribution to the revolutionary uprising was remembered mainly through the diffusion and spontaneous expression of Situationist ideas and slogans, in graffiti, and in posters using *détournement* (mainly of comic strips, a graphic technique pioneered after 1962) (fig. 3.7 and 3.8) as well as in serried assaults on the routines of everyday life—in short, a cultural rather than a political contribution, in the sense that the Situationists had come to demand. Debord's political theory was more or less reduced to the title of his book, which was generalized as an isolated catchphrase and separated from its theoretical project. Council communism was quickly forgotten by students and workers alike.[16]

Thus the SI was fated to be incorporated into the legendary series of avant-garde artists and groups whose paths had intersected with popular revolutionary movements at emblematic moments. Its dissolution in 1972 brought to an end an epoch that began in Paris with the "Futurist Manifesto" of 1909—the epoch of the historic avant-gardes with their typical apparatus of international organization and propaganda, manifestos, congresses, quarrels, scandals, indictments, expulsions, polemics, group photographs, little magazines, mysterious episodes, provocations, utopian theories, and intense desires to transform art, society, the world, and the pattern of everyday life.

This is a truth, but only a partial truth. Separated from the mass of the working class, the SI was bound to remain in memory and in effect what it had begun by being, an artistic movement just like the surrealists before it. But at the same time, this neither tells the whole story of the relation between art and politics nor does justice to the theoretical work of the SI and of Debord in particular. If we can see the SI as the summation of the historic avant-gardes, we can equally view it as the summation of Western Marxism—and in neither case does the conclusion of an era mean that it need no longer be understood or its lessons learned and valued. May 1968 was both a curtain call and a prologue, a turning point in a drama we are all still blindly living.

DANS LE DÉCOR SPECTACULAIRE OÙ LE REGARD NE RENCONTRE QUE LES CHOSES ET LEUR PRIX...
RIEN NE MANQUE AU CONFORT DE L'ENNUI.
...LE BON USAGE DU CHOIX COMMENCE AVEC LE REFUS DE PAYER.
JE T'OFFRE UN PULL, J'EN AI PIQUÉ TROIS. ET TOI?
DEUX BOUQUINS ET UNE BOUTEILLE DE GIN.
CE QUI SE PERD EN CONTESTATION PARTIELLE REJOINT LA FONCTION OPPRESSIVE DU VIEUX MONDE.
LA CULTURE? MAIS C'EST LA MARCHANDISE IDÉALE, CELLE QUI FAIT PAYER TOUTES LES AUTRES. PAS ÉTONNANT QUE VOUS VOULIEZ L'OFFRIR À TOUS.
C'EST INTÉRESSANT CE QUE VOUS DITES. VENEZ DONC EN DISCUTER DIMANCHE À LA MAISON DE LA CULTURE.
COMME VOUS AVEZ RAISON DE VOLER DES LIVRES. LA CULTURE DEVRAIT ÊTRE À LA PORTÉE DE TOUS.
ATTENTION, C'EST UN FLIC!
ET UN CURÉ. SALAUD!
IL N'EST PAS DE GESTE SI RADICAL QUE L'IDÉOLOGIE N'ESSAIE DE RÉCUPÉRER.
ON A FAILLI SE FAIRE PINCER.
TU NOUS EMMÈNES AU CINÉMA?
NON IL N'Y A QUE DU GODARD, ÇA NE NOUS CHANGERAIT PAS DES CURÉS VENEZ FILLETTES, JE VOUS INVITE.
MAIS L'UNITÉ DE L'OPPRESSION FAIT LA COHÉRENCE DES RENCONTRES POSSIBLES.
ET LES RÉSERVES IMPOSÉES AU PLAISIR EXCITENT AU PLAISIR DE VIVRE SANS RÉSERVES.
...AU TRAVAIL...
...À TOUS LES MENSONGES, À TOUTES LES FAMILLES...
DÉJÀ IL FAUT SE QUITTER, RETOURNER À L'ENNUI, AUX TEMPS MORTS.
NE VOUS CONTENTEZ PAS DE REVENDICATIONS PARTIELLES.
CE QUE VOUS PRODUISEZ VOUS APPARTIENT.
NE CHANGEZ PAS D'EMPLOYEURS, CHANGEZ L'EMPLOI DE LA VIE.
RÉGLONS NOS AFFAIRES NOUS-MÊME
VIVE L'AUTOGESTION
MORT AUX MANGEANTS.
CAMARADES, CECI N'EST QU'UN COMMENCEMENT. POUR EN SAVOIR PLUS LONG SUR VOUS-MÊMES, POUR RECONNAÎTRE RAPIDEMENT VOS POSSIBILITÉS, LISEZ LA REVUE "INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONNISTE". LE NUMÉRO 11 VIENT DE PARAÎTRE, ROUTE POSTALE 307 03 PARIS,
internationale situationniste
Imp. Les Presses du Marais 5, rue Aubriot Paris IV

3.7
Gérard Joannès
Poster announcing the publication of No. 11 of
the SI journal, 1967


DANS LE DÉCOR SPECTACULAIRE OÙ LE REGARD NE RENCONTRE QUE LES CHOSES ET LEUR PRIX
RIEN NE MANQUE AU CONFORT DE L'ENNUI
CHOISISSEZ LUXE
LE BON USAGE DU CHOIX COMMENCE AVEC LE REFUS DE PAYER
COMME VOUS AVEZ RAISON DE VOLER DES LIVRES LA CULTURE DEVRAIT ETRE A LA PORTÉE DE TOUS.
MAIS C'EST LA MARCHANDISE IDÉALE
ATTENTION C EST UN FLIC
ET UN CURÉ SALAUD
CE QUI SE PERD EN CONTESTATION PARTIELLE REJOINT LA FONCTION OPPRESSIVE DU VIEUX MONDE.
MAIS L'UNITÉ DE L'OPPRESSION FAIT LA COHÉRENCE DES RENCONTRES POSSIBLES.
BAR
TU NOUS EMMÈNES AU CINÉMA?
ON A FAILLI SE FAIRE PINCER
NON IL N'Y A QUE DU GODARD, ÇA NE NOUS CHANGERAIT PAS DES CURÉS VENEZ, FILLETTES, JE VOUS INVITE
ET LES RÉSERVES IMPOSÉES AU PLAISIR EXCITENT AU PLAISIR DE VIVRE SANS RÉSERVES
DÉJÀ IL FAUT SE HÂTER RETOURNER À L'EN NUI AUX TEMPS MORTS
AU TRAVAIL
À TOUS LES MENSONGES À TOUTES LES FAMILLES ...
RÉGLONS NOS AFFAIRES NOUS MÊMES
CE QUE VOUS PRODUISEZ VOUS APPARTIENT.
NE VOUS CONTENTEZ PAS DE REVENDICATIONS PARTIELLES...
NE CHANGEZ PAS D'EMPLOYEURS CHANGEZ L'EMPLOI DE LA VIE!
VIVE L'AUTOGESTION
MORT AUX DIRIGEANTS
Imp. Les Presses du Marais 5, rue Aubriot Paris IV
CAMARADES, CECI N'EST QU'UN COMMENCEMENT. POUR EN SAVOIR PLUS LONG SUR VOUS-MÊMES, POUR RECONNAÎTRE RAPIDEMENT VOS POSSIBILITÉS LISEZ LA REVUE "INTERNATIONALE SITUATIONNISTE", LE NUMÉRO 11 VIENT DE PARAÎTRE, BOITE POSTALE 307 03 PARIS,
internationale situationniste

3.8
André Bertrand
Poster announcing the publication of No. 11 of the SI journal, 1967

II

Western Marxism developed in two phases. The first followed World War I and the Bolshevik revolution. In 1923 Lukács published his collection of essays *History and Class Consciousness* and Karl Korsch the first edition of his book *Marxism and Philosophy.*[17] The immediate postwar years had brought a revolutionary ferment in Europe, which was eventually rolled back by the forces of order, leaving the Soviet Union alone and isolated, but in command of a defeated and demoralized international movement. In time, not only was this movement further threatened and mortally attacked by fascism, but the Soviet Union, the citadel of communism itself, fell into the hands of Stalin. The early writings of Lukács and Korsch are the product of this period of revolutionary ferment, while Western Marxism later developed under the shadow of fascism—Antonio Gramsci in an Italian prison; Korsch and the Frankfurt School in an American exile. Only Lukács went East to make his peace with Stalinism and adapt his theoretical position accordingly.

The second phase of Western Marxism came after World War II and the victory over fascism of the Soviet Union (together, of course, with its American ally). Once again, the growth of resistance movements and the dynamic of victory brought with it a revolutionary ferment that triumphed in Yugoslavia and Albania, was crushed in Greece, and channeled into parliamentary forms in France and Italy. Immediately after the war Jean-Paul Sartre began his long process of interweaving existentialism with Marxism, and Lefebvre published his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1946).[18] A decisive new impetus came when the Soviet Union suppressed the Hungarian revolution in 1956 and a wave of intellectuals left the Western Communist parties. It is from this date especially that we can see the beginnings of the New Left and the intellectual crosscurrents that led to 1968.

The shift of the center of Western Marxism to France from Germany (the product, of course, of the catastrophe of fascism and the absence of a resistance movement in Germany) naturally led to shifts of emphasis. However, these were not as great as might be imagined, because French thought had already opened itself before the war to the influence of Hegel (and Martin Heidegger), and it was therefore possible to reabsorb Lukács's writings when they were republished in the post-1956 journal *Arguments.*[19] Indeed, there were many obvious affinities both with Sartre's method and with Lefebvre's.

Debord (fig. 3.9) dates his "independent" life from 1950, when he first threw himself into the artistic and cultural scene of the Left Bank—its bars, its cinemas, its bookshops.[20] His thought was marked in turn by Sartre (the concept of situation), Lefebvre (the critique of everyday life), the *Arguments* group, and Lukács (the subject-object dialectic and the concept of reification). In the first instance Debord envisaged Lefebvre's "everyday life" as a series of fortuitous Sartrean situations. Existence, Sartre had argued, is always existence within surroundings, within a given situation, which is both lived-in and lived-beyond, through the subject's choice of the manner of being in that situation, itself a given. Following Lefebvre's injunction to transform everyday life, Debord interpreted that as an injunction to construct situations, as an artistic and practical activity, rather than accept them as given; what he sought to do was to impose a conscious order at least in enclaves of everyday life, an order that would permit fully free activity, play set consciously within the context of everyday life, not separated from it in the sphere of leisure.[21]

3.9
Guy Debord (on the right)

From situation Debord enlarged his scope to city, and from city to society.[22] This, in turn, involved an enlargement of the subject of transformation from the group (the affinity-group of Lettrists or Situationists with shared goals) to the mass of the proletariat, constructing the totality of social situations in which it lived. It is at this point that Debord was forced to think beyond the sphere of possible action of himself and his immediate associates and engage with classical revolutionary theory. This, in turn, radicalized him further and sent him back to Western Marxism to reinterpret it on a new basis. Instead of changing transient and brief periods, limited ambiances, the whole of social space and time was to be transformed and, if it was to be transformed, it must first be theorized. This theory, it followed, must be the theory of contemporary (even future) society and contemporary alienation (the key idea for Lefebvre).

When Lukács wrote *History and Class Consciousness*, it represented a shift in his thought from romantic anti-capitalism to Marxism, made possible first by assigning the role of the subject of history to the working class and, second, by combining Marx's concept of commodity fetishism with the Hegelian concept of objectification to produce a theory of reification as the contemporary capitalist form of the alienation of human subjectivity. Debord, reading Lukács many decades later, was able to relate Lukács's theory of the reification of labor in the commodity to the appearance of consumerism in the long postwar boom of Keynesian capitalism. Just as Lukács was writing during the first period of Fordism, that of standardization and mass production, so Debord was writing in the second, that of variety marketing and mass consumption. Consumer society confronted producers with their products alienated not only in money

form, quantitatively, but also in image form, qualitatively, in advertising, publicity, media—instances of the general form of "spectacle."

However, in order to get from the *Report on the Construction of Situations* (1957) to *Society of the Spectacle* ten years later, Debord had to pass through the portals of the past—the legacy of classical Marxism, discredited by the cruel experience of Stalinism yet still the sole repository of the concept of proletarian revolution. Scholars have disagreed about the relation of Western to classical Marxism, drawing the dividing line between the two at different places. For Perry Anderson, Western Marxism results from the blockage of revolutionary hope in the West and the consequent substitution of Western Marxism, a formal shift away from economics and history towards philosophy and aesthetics in a long detour from the classical tradition. For Russell Jacoby, in contrast, Western Marxism is a displacement onto the terrain of philosophy of the political Left of the classical tradition, the failed opposition to Leninism, articulated politically in the council communism movement.[23]

Council communism, the literal interpretation of the slogan "All power to the soviets!" flourished briefly during the post-1917 period of revolutionary upsurge and marked the work of Lukács, Korsch, and Gramsci at that time. Lukács and Gramsci rallied back to the orthodox line, stressing the party as the condensed organizer of a diffuse class (the Hegelian "subject" and Machiavellian "prince" respectively), while Korsch remained loyal to councilist principles, stressing the self-organization of the workers in their own autonomously formed councils. This debate over party and council, the necessary mediations between state and class, reached its highest peak at this period, but it had already taken shape before the war. The debates in the German party between Herman Gorter and Anton Pannekoek (from Holland), Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Kautsky, and those in the Russian party between Alexander Bogdanov and Lenin prefigured the postwar debates on councils.[24] In fact, Lenin polemicized mainly against both the Dutch councilists and Bogdanov in the immediate postrevolutionary years, and figures such as Lukács and Korsch, with no background in the prewar movement, only felt the backwash of the titanic struggles of their elders.

The immediate background to these clashes lay in the quite unanticipated appearance of soviets in the 1905 Russian revolution and the rise of syndicalism as a competitor to Marxism in Western Europe (and, with the rise of the International Workers of the World [IWW], in America too).[25] It is significant also that both the Dutch and Russian trends were associated with philosophical (as well as political) heterodoxy—Pannekoek and Gorter promoted the monist religion of science of Joseph Dietzgen, and Bogdanov the monist positivism of Ernst Mach. These philosophical deviations reflected the wish to find a role for collective subjectivity in politics that went beyond the limits imposed by scientific socialism, bringing them closer both to the syndicalist mystique of the working class as collectivity and the concomitant stress on activism (expressed in extreme form by Georges Sorel).

After the Bolshevik revolution, Left Communists with philosophical inclinations turned away from the modified scientism of Dietzgen and Mach (with its stress on monism and the subjective factor in science) to full-scale Hegelianism, covered by the tribute paid to Hegel

by Marx. Lukács and Korsch went far beyond reviving Hegel as a predecessor of Marx (turned into a materialist by being stood on his head) and integrated Hegelian concepts and methods into the heart of Marxism itself: especially those of totality and subject. In this way council communism appeared as a Marxist reformulation of syndicalist ideas and Western Marxism as a philosophical reformulation of scientific socialism. The link between the two was provided by the transformation of romantic, vitalist, and libertarian forms of activism into the Hegelian categories of subjectivity and praxis as the expression of the self-consciousness of the proletariat as a class. At the same time, they instituted a much more radical break with classical Marxism and suffered a much more serious political defeat than their predecessors.

Like Western Marxism, however, council communism was revived in France after the Liberation by the *Socialisme ou barbarie* group, who began a correspondence with the aged Pannekoek. Both the leaders of this group were ex-Trotskyists—Claude Lefort had joined the Fourth International after studying philosophy with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Cornelius Castoriadis was a Greek militant and economist who left the Communist party for Trotskyism during the German occupation of Greece, which he fled after the civil war. Lefort and Castoriadis then left the Trotskyists to set up their own journal, *Socialisme ou barbarie*, in 1949. The Fourth International was the single organizational form of classical Marxism to survive the debacle of Stalinism, but after Trotsky's assassination it split into a number of fragments, divided over the analysis of the Soviet Union. Loyalists followed Trotsky in dubbing it a "degenerated workers' state," while others judged it "state capitalist." A third path was taken by *Socialisme ou barbarie*, which characterized the Soviet Union as a bureaucracy and came to see a convergence both in the East and West towards competing bureaucratic state systems.

In 1958 the *Socialisme ou barbarie* group split over questions of self-organization, and Lefort left the group. Castoriadis remained the leading figure until its dissolution in 1966 (although there was another split in 1964 when Castoriadis abandoned Marxism).[26] Debord's contact with the group was primarily through Castoriadis who, it should be stressed, was not a philosopher but an economist whose misgivings over orthodox Marxist theory began with the law of value. When revolution is uniformly against a bureaucratic class, East and West, there is in any case no pressing need for Marx's *Capital*. Debord, however, did not follow Castoriadis entirely out of Marxism, though he often blurs the distinction between bureaucracy and capitalism, if only because the Lukácsian side of his system would collapse back into its Weberian origins and antithesis if the Marxist concept of capital was removed.[27]

Debord was able to take Lukács's ringing endorsement of the revolutionary workers' councils and transpose his critique of the Mensheviks to fit the Western Communist parties and the unions they controlled ("Moreover, the function of the trade unions consists more in atomizing and depoliticizing the movement, in falsifying its relationship with the totality, while the Menshevik parties have more the role of fixing reification in the consciousness of the working class, both ideologically and organizationally").[28] Debord had only to read "Communist" for "Menshevik" to fit a contemporary political analysis into the historic Lukácsian framework. But, for Debord, as for the *Socialisme ou barbarie* group, the fact that the Com-

munist party was bureaucratic in form and ideology, a force of order rather than revolution, meant not that an alternative party should be built but that the very idea of party should be rejected. Instead of a party, necessarily separated from the working class, the revolution should be carried out by the workers themselves, organized in self-managing councils.

At the same time, the concept of revolution itself changed from the Leninist model. Instead of seeking state power, the councils should move directly to abolish the state. The revolution meant the immediate realization of the realm of freedom, the abolition of all forms of reification and alienation in their totality, and their replacement by forms of untrammeled subjectivity. Thus the syndicalist specter rose up again to haunt social democracy, fortified by the philosophical armory of Western Marxism and carried, in accordance with Debord's temperament, to its extreme conclusion. Lukács had always assumed the existence of mediations within the totality, forms of unity within difference, but Debord's maximalist vision sought to abolish all separation, to unite subject and object, practice and theory, structure and superstructure, politics and administration, in a single unmediated totality.

The impetus behind this maximalism came from the idea of the transformation of everyday life. This in turn derived from Lefebvre's idea of total (that is, unalienated) man. Lefebvre was the first French Marxist to revive the humanist ideas of the young Marx and (though he never questioned the privileged role of economics in Marxist theory) he began to argue that Marxism had been wrongly restricted to the political and economic domains when its analysis should be extended to cover every aspect of life, wherever alienation existed—in private life and in leisure time, as well as at work. Marxism needed a topical sociology; it should be involved in cultural studies, it should not be afraid of the trivial. In the last analysis, Marxism meant not only the transformation of economic and political structures, but "the transformation of life right down to its detail, right down to its everydayness." Economics and politics were only means to the realization of an unalienated, total humanity.[29]

Lefebvre began his intellectual career in the 1920s in close association with André Breton and the surrealists. As a member of the *Philosophies* group he co-signed the manifesto against the Riff war in 1925 and remained involved with the surrealists at least until his entry into the Communist party in 1928 (although Breton denounced him by name in the "Second Surrealist Manifesto" of 1929 as base, insincere, and opportunistic—insults that Lefebvre did not forget when he vilified Breton in the *Critique of Everyday Life*).[30] Personal and political quarrels aside, in retrospect we can see how much Lefebvre owed to Breton—not only the idea of the transformation of everyday life, a fundamental surrealist concept, but even his introduction to Hegel and Marx. "He showed me a book on his table, Vera's translation of Hegel's *Logic*, a very bad translation, and said something disdainfully of the sort: 'You haven't even read this?' A few days later, I began to read Hegel, who led me to Marx."[31] Breton never swerved from his own attachment to Hegel: "The fact remains that ever since I first encountered Hegel, that is, since I presented him in the face of the sarcasms with which my philosopher professor, around 1912, André Cresson, a positivist, pursued him, I have steeped myself in his views and, for me, his method has reduced all others to beggary. For me, where the Hegelian dialectic is not at work, there is no thought, no hope of truth."[32]

III

Historians of Western Marxism have tended to discount Breton, seeing him as "offbeat" (!) or lacking in "seriousness."[33] Perhaps it is because, like Debord but unlike every other Western Marxist, he was never a professor. No doubt Breton's interpretation of Hegel, like his interpretation of Freud, Marx, love, and art (to name his major preoccupations), was often aberrant, but the fact remains that contemporary French culture is unthinkable without him. Not only did he develop a theory and practice of art that has had enormous effect (perhaps more than any other in our time) but he also introduced both Freud and Hegel to France, first to nonspecialist circles, but then back into the specialized world through those he influenced (Lefebvre, Jacques Lacan, Georges Bataille, Claude Lévi-Strauss) and thence out again into the general culture.[34] Politically too, he was consistent from the mid-1920s on, joining and leaving the Communist party on principled grounds, bringing support to Trotsky in his tragic last years and lustre to the beleaguered and often tawdry Trotskyist movement.

The 1920s were a period of dynamic avant-gardism, in many ways a displacement of the energy released by the Russian revolution. Groups like the surrealists identified with the revolution and mimicked in their own organization many of the characteristics of Leninism, including establishing a central journal, issuing manifestos and agitational leaflets, guarding the purity of the group, and expelling deviationists. (Characteristics which carried through, of course, to the Situationists.) But there were many features of the surrealist movement and specifically of Breton's thought that distinguish it from other avant-garde groups and theorists of the time.[35] Indeed, it might even be possible to think of surrealism as a form of Western avant-gardism, as opposed to the Soviet avant-gardism that not only flourished in the Soviet Union (futurism, constructivism, Lef) but also in central Europe. Especially in Germany there was a struggle between a Bauhaus- and constructivist-oriented modernism (often explicitly Soviet-oriented too) and expressionism, which had affinities with surrealism but lacked both its originality and its theoretical foundation. Constructivism too had its reformist wing, closely tied to German social democracy.

The Soviet avant-garde, like the surrealist, wanted to revolutionize art in a sense that went beyond a simple change of form and content; what was desired was the alteration of its entire social role. But whereas Breton wanted to take art and poetry into everyday life, the aim in the Soviet Union was to take art into production. In both cases the bourgeois forms of art were to be suppressed, but the Soviet artists and theorists stressed the affinities of art with science and technology, tried to take art into modern industry, and argued that artists should become workers or experts. Beauty, dreams, and creativity were idle bourgeois notions. Art should find a productive function in the new Soviet society and in such a role it would cease even to be art. "Death to art, long live production!"[36] Thus the scientism of orthodox Marxism and productivism of postrevolutionary Soviet ideology were imported into the world view of the militant artist. But Breton's Western avant-gardism went in the opposite direction, abhorring modern industry; anti-functionalist, deeply suspicious of one-sided materialism and positivism, and dedicated to releasing the values of romantic and decadent poets from the confines of literature, it aestheticized life rather than productivizing art.

As did Lukács, Breton brought about an irruption of romanticism into Marxism, and both figures drew upon

a literary background and reflected the convert's enthusiasm for the drama of revolution.[37] But there were three significant differences between Breton and Lukács. First, Breton was himself a poet rather than a critic and, for this reason, the problem of practice was located for him directly within the sphere of art. Hence his theoretical stance had a direct bearing on his own activity. Second, as a result of his training as a medical psychiatrist, he turned to Freud and integrated elements of psychoanalytic theory into his thought before he made any formal approach to Marxism. In some ways Freud played the same kind of role for Breton as Georg Simmel or Max Weber for Lukács, but Breton's interest in Freud took him into the domain of psychology whereas for Lukács the engagement was with sociology. Thus when Breton read Marx or Lenin it was in relation to the mind, rather than in relation to society as with Lukács. Third, Breton, despite his Hegelianism, insisted always on retaining the specificity and autonomy of artistic revolution, intellectually and organizationally.

Breton spelled out his position very clearly from the beginning. Thus in the "Second Surrealist Manifesto" he sets himself the question: "Do you believe that literary and artistic output is a purely individual phenomenon? Don't you think that it can or must be the reflection of the main currents which determine the social and political evolution of humanity?" He rephrases the question in his answer: "The only question one can rightly raise concerning [literary or artistic output] is that of the *sovereignty of thought.*" Quoting Engels, he then concludes that art, as a mode of thought, is "sovereign and limitless by its nature, its vocation, potentially and with respect to its ultimate goal in history; but lacking sovereignty and limited in each of its applications and in any of its several states." Thus art "can only oscillate between the awareness of its inviolate autonomy and that of its utter dependence." The logic of Breton's argument presumes that it is the task of the social revolution to get rid of that limiting "dependence" on economic and social determinations, but meanwhile art should fiercely guard its "inviolate autonomy." He goes on to dismiss the idea of proletarian art and concludes that "just as Marx's forecasts and predictions have proved to be accurate, I can see nothing which would invalidate a single word of Lautréamont's with respect to events of interest only to the mind."[38]

When he wrote this, Breton was still a party member. It was not until 1933 that the break came, despite Breton's public support for Trotsky, his rift with Louis Aragon over the subordination of art to party politics, and his increasing exasperation at the cult of labor in the Soviet Union. (André Thirion, a Communist surrealist, wrote: "I say shit on all those counter-revolutionaries and their miserable idol, WORK!"—a position later taken up by the Situationists.)[39] After leaving the party, his line remained constant. In the 1942 "Prolegomena to a Third Surrealist Manifesto or Not," he explains that theoretical systems "can reasonably be considered to be nothing but tools on the carpenter's workbench. This carpenter is *you*. Unless you have gone stark raving mad, you will not try to make do without all those tools except one, and to stand up for the plane to the point of declaring that the use of hammers is wrong and wicked." For Breton, Marxist and Freudian theory, like politics and art, were distinct but compatible, each with its own object and its own goals. Breton did not try to develop an integrated "Freudo-Marxism" (like Wilhelm Reich or Herbert Marcuse), but maintained the specificity of each in its own domain, psyche and society. It should be clear what

the implications were when the Situationists later rejected Breton and accepted Lukács.[40]

For Breton, the transformation of everyday life moved on a different time scale from that of the revolution. It could take place for *individuals* here and now, however transiently and imperfectly. In Breton's interpretation of Freud, we find that everyday reality can satisfy us all too little. As a result we are forced to act out our desires as fantasies, thus compensating "for the insufficiencies of our actual existence." But anyone "who has any artistic gift," rather than retreating into fantasy or displacing repressed desires into symptoms, can "under certain favorable conditions" sublimate desires into artistic creation, thus putting the world of desire in positive contact with that of reality, even managing to "turn these desire-fantasies into reality." In his book *Communicating Vessels* Breton describes how his dreams reorganize events of everyday life (the "day's residues" in Freudian terms) into new patterns, just as everyday life presents him with strange constellations of material familiar from his dreams.[41] The two supposedly distinct realms are in fact "communicating vessels." Thus Breton does not argue for dreams over everyday life (or vice versa) but for their reciprocal interpermeation as value and goal.

Breton's concept of everyday life reminds us of how Freud in his *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* mapped out the paths by which desire (*Wunsch*) inscribes itself in everyday gestures and actions. Breton wanted to recast this involuntary contact between unconscious desire and reality by a voluntary form of communication in which, as in poetry, the semantic resources of the unconscious, no longer dismissed after Freud's work as meaningless, were channeled by the artist, consciously lifting the bans and interdictions of censorship and repression, but not seeking consciously to control the material thus liberated. For Breton, Hegel provided the philosophical foundation for a rejection of dualism—there was no iron wall between subject and object, mind and matter, pleasure principle and reality principle, dream (everynight life, so to speak) and waking everyday life. We should be equally alert to the potential of reality in our dreams and fantasies and of desire in our mundane reality. As Breton succinctly put it, the point was both to change the world and to interpret it.

In many ways, Breton was less hostile to the scientific approach than was Lukács, less ingrained in his romanticism. For Lukács science ruled the realm of human knowledge of nature, whereas human history itself was the province of dialectical philosophy, of a coming-to-consciousness of the objective world that was simultaneously the attainment of self-consciousness. Breton, on the other hand, was quite happy to accept the scientific status of historical materialism with its objective laws and propositions about reality, provided that equal status was given to poetry with its allegiance to the unconscious, to the pleasure principle. Thus Breton was completely unconcerned by any concept of consciousness, class or otherwise. For him, there was the possibility of science—the concern of somebody else, since he lacked the totalizing spirit—and there was poetry, the field of unconscious desire, with which he was intensely concerned while recognizing the claims of science and orthodox Marxism in almost all his public pronouncements. It is no wonder that Breton's Hegelianism (based, we should remind ourselves, on the *Logic*) was so inimical and seemed so scandalously inept to the mainstream of Marxists and existentialists who read Hegel, in con-

trast, through the *Phenomenology of Mind*, or through a totalizing theory of history.[42]

Debord's rejection of surrealism focused mainly on the blind alleys and wrong turnings down which Breton's faith in the unconscious and belief in "objective chance" (a phrase, incidentally, borrowed from Engels) came to lead him in his later years. Increasingly, Breton began to dabble distractedly in occultism, spiritualism, and parapsychology, to become a magus rather than a poet. Debord's refusal to accept Breton's supernaturalism led him to deny any role to the unconscious and to be extremely sceptical about Freud in general. (In *Society of the Spectacle* he toys with the idea of a "social unconscious" and concludes, "where the economic *id* was, there *ego* [*le je*] must come about.")[43] Thus in the 1950s, Debord joined the Lettrist movement and then split from it to form the Lettrist International with a few friends. Lettrism sought to go beyond the schism between abstract and figurative art (which marked West and East as well as different trends within surrealist painting) by reintroducing the word into the sphere of the visual (*metagraphie*), establishing a kind of interzone between dadaist word-collage and concrete poetry. Lettrists, under the leadership of Isidore Isou, also used a pseudo-technical vocabulary of neologism and sought to combine technical innovation with neo-dadaist scandal.[44]

Despite opting for Lettrism rather than surrealism, Debord was still able to collaborate with the Belgian surrealists around *Les lèvres nues* in the late fifties, and he continued to recognize the legacy he had inherited from surrealism (albeit in mutilated form) while also striving to supersede it—to go beyond the realization of art to its suppression, that is, its integration into the totality through its own self-negation. What this meant in effect was both the inversion of surrealism (the ego, rather than censoring unconscious desire, was to consciously free the self from the determinism of the unconscious) and the displacement of the surrealist notion of poetic freedom as the uncompromising release of repressed desire into the practical and conventionally political register of council communism. This displacement also involved, of course, a semantic shift in the meaning of the word *desire* (from unconscious to conscious) that enabled the SI to endorse the surrealist slogan "Take your desires for reality" adopted by the Enragés at Nanterre (rather than the suspect " Power to the imagination" launched by the 22 March group).[45] The poetic revolution *must be* the political revolution and vice versa, unconditionally and in full self-consciousness.

However, the LI around Debord was not the only channel by which surrealist and Marxist thought reached the SI. The artists from the COBRA movement brought with them their own revision of surrealism and their own political positions and theories. Asger Jorn (fig. 3.10), in particular, was not only a prolific artist and dedicated organizer, but also a compulsive writer and theorist. The first phase of the SI was marked as much by Jorn as by Debord and though Jorn resigned from the group in 1961, his influence was lasting. He was never criticized or denounced by Debord, either through the period of the schism (when Jorn collaborated with both parties, under different false names) or during the highly politicized period before and after 1968. Debord paid a moving posthumous tribute to his old comrade (Jorn died in 1973) in his essay in *Le jardin d'Albisola* (1974), a book of photographs of the ceramic garden Jorn had built in Albisola, northern Italy in the late 1950s, the time of their first contact.[46]

3.10
Asger Jorn (on the right), with Guy Debord (left) and Michèle Bernstein (center), in Paris

IV

COBRA (the name originates from the initial letters of Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) was formed by a group of artists from Denmark, Holland, and Belgium (including Jorn and Constant) in November 1948.[47] In broad terms, COBRA was an outgrowth of the disenchantment with surrealism by artists whose political ideas were formed during the Resistance. After Breton returned to Paris, he took a militantly anti-Communist line politically and sought to reimpose his own views and tastes on surrealist groups that had flourished independently during his exile. These artists were unwilling to break with Communist comrades with whom they had worked in the struggle against the German occupation and wanted to see surrealism move forward onto new, experimental ground, rather than revive prewar trends, especially towards abstraction in painting and supernaturalism in ideology.

After the Liberation, groups of French and Belgian Communists split with Breton to form the Revolutionary Surrealist movement, but then split among themselves over how to respond to Communist party attacks on even pro-Communist surrealism (the French wanted to dissolve the group, the Belgians disagreed) and over abstract art (the French in favor, the Belgians against). Meanwhile, Christian Dotremont, a poet and leader of the Belgian faction, had made contact with Jorn, Constant, and their friends. They too had been formed by the Resistance and were active in small avant-garde groups. At the end of the war, Jorn returned to Paris (where he had studied with Fernand Léger and worked with Le Corbusier in the late 1930s). There he met members of the French surrealist movement who later joined the Revolutionary Surrealists, and also Constant, with whom he struck up a friendship. He even went on a pilgrimage to visit André Breton, who dubbed him "Swedenborgian" but reportedly "got lost in the labyrinth of theories delivered sometimes rather abruptly in Jorn's gravelly French." There had already been a definite surrealist influence on Danish painting, but of a diluted, eclectic, and stylized kind. Despite his initial sympathy and interest Jorn felt the need to find a new direction.[48]

Later the same year (December 1946) Jorn went north to Lapland to spend time in retreat, reading and writing, developing the outlines of a heterodox Marxist theory of art. Before the war, Jorn had been deeply influenced by the Danish syndicalist Christian Christensen, and he continued to honour Christensen, paying homage to him in the pages of the journal *Internationale situationniste* many decades later. During the Resistance Jorn left syndicalism for communism, but he always retained the libertarian principles he had learned from Christensen as well as a faith in direct action and collective work. The theoretical project Jorn set himself was massive and arduous. Essentially he wanted to recast elements from surrealism (magic, child art, "primitive" art, automatism) and combine these with strong strands of Scandinavian romanticism and libertarian activism within a materialist and Marxist framework.[49]

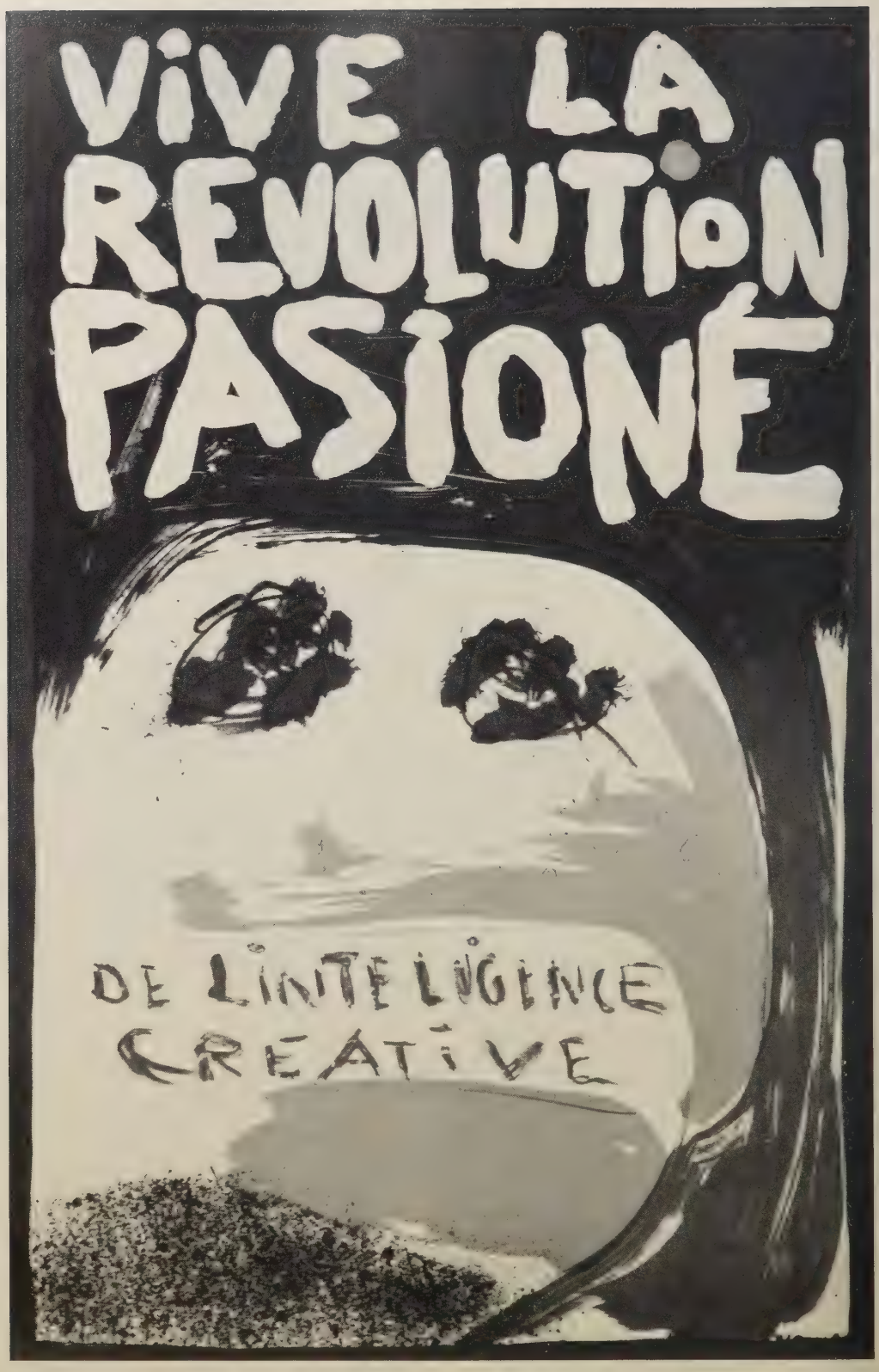
Jorn began by defining materialism in relation to nature. Materialist art would express the natural being of humans as well as their social being. It would be on the side of instinctive vitality and would involve physical gesture. European art was vitiated by its classical heritage, its metaphysical overvaluation of reason and the ideal. The "materialist attitude to life" must involve the expression of natural rhythms and passions, rather than seeking to subordinate activity to a sovereign reason or engage in

the unnatural and slavish copying of nature. Materialist art, therefore, was Dionysiac rather than Apollonian; it was on the side of festival and play—"spontaneity, life, fertility and *movement*." Jorn consistently attacked classicism (and its surrogates, realism and functionalism) and favored instead the "oriental" and the "nordic," which he associated with ornament and magical symbolism respectively. (It is interesting that Breton, in the "First Manifesto of Surrealism" also celebrates the nordic and the oriental as privileged fields for the "marvellous.") The nordic especially fascinated Jorn, who worked closely with the eminent Professor P. V. Glob and other scholars on studies of prehistoric and ancient Scandinavian society and art.[50] Jorn believed that the intensively local and the extensively cosmopolitan should mutually reinforce each other.

Jorn never really completed his theoretical task, though he published a vast number of articles and books in addition to leaving many unpublished manuscripts. He wrestled continuously with the problems of the dialectic, drawing not directly on Hegel but on Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* and *Anti-Dühring*. He tended to reduce the dialectic to the simple combination of opposites into a unity, and then be uncertain how to unsettle this new synthesis that itself threatened to develop in a one-sided way. In the end he even invented a new logic of "trialectics"! There is an aspect to Jorn's theoretical work that is reminiscent of Dietzgen or Bogdanov, an attraction to forms of mystical monism, as he strives to reconcile Søren Kierkegaard or Emanuel Swedenborg with Engels and the dialectic of nature. Often too he seems caught between the constraints of system building and spontaneous impulses towards provocation and proliferation, which spring no doubt from his libertarian background.

Constant, though rather more sparing in his prose, developed a line of thought similar to that of Jorn, but much simpler. For Constant, surrealism had been right in its struggle against constructivism ("objective formalism") but had become too intellectualized. It was necessary to find new ways of expressing the impulse that lay behind surrealism in order to create a popular, libertarian art. In his painting, Constant, like Jorn, developed a style that was neither abstract nor realist, but used figurative forms that drew on child art and the motifs of magical symbolism without effacing the differentiating trace of physical gestures. For both Constant and Jorn, art was always a process of research, rather than the production of finished objects. Both were influenced by libertarian syndicalism—Jorn through Christensen, Constant via the Dutch tradition of Pannekoek and Gorter. They stressed the role of the creative impulse, of art as an expression of an attitude to life, dynamic and disordered like a popular festival, rather than a form of ideational production (fig. 3.11).

In Brussels, Christian Dotrement was of course much closer to surrealism than Jorn or Constant, much more influenced by French culture.[51] The COBRA group in general had an ambivalent relationship with Paris. Dotrement, as the closest, perhaps experienced this love-hate relationship most intensely. In the immediate postwar years he was attracted immediately to Lefebvre's critique of everyday life. Lefebvre seemed to offer the possibility of an alternative to surrealism and existentialism that was Communist without being orthodox. Art should pair itself with the critical spirit to transform consciousness through "experiments on everyday life." At the same time, Dotremont was deeply influenced by the work of Gaston Bachelard, whose works on poetic reverie and the four elements had been



3.11
Asger Jorn
Vive la revolution pasioné
(Live the Passionate Revolution)
Poster, 1968

appearing through the early 1940s. Bachelard stressed the distinction between images of perception and those of the active imagination that allowed us to see, for instance, figures and scenes in the flames of the fireplace or the whorls of wood. For COBRA artists, Bachelard pointed to a third path between realism and the delineation of purely mental dreams and fantasies by one section of surrealist painters, while also avoiding the abstraction of the rest of the surrealists. After he was introduced to Bachelard's work, Jorn too was deeply impressed. At the museum he instituted at Silkeborg in Denmark there is a startling and magnificent portrait of Bachelard, one of the few he ever painted.

COBRA thus brought together elements from surrealism, a commitment to revolutionary politics, an openness to experimentation and new ideas, and a determination to make art that was materialist, festive, and vital. COBRA wanted to displace the three major contenders in the Paris art world: the decomposing School of Paris (which sought to unite a refined cubism with a pallid fauvism), orthodox Bretonian surrealism, and the various forms of abstract and nonfigurative art. By the time the movement dissolved in 1951, after only three years of existence, it had both succeeded triumphantly and failed miserably. It triumphed historically but failed in its immediate aims in that it proved impossible at that time either to set up alternative art centers to Paris or to conquer the Paris art world from the outside. Although many of the COBRA artists stayed in loose touch, the group broke up organizationally and geographically. Jorn and Constant both ended up in the Situationist movement (which underwent the same problems between Paris and the COBRA capitals). In the end, of course, COBRA was recognized at its full value, but not until Paris was displaced as an art center—first by New York, then by a redistribution of influence within Europe (and eventually between Europe and New York).[52]

The immediate reasons for the breakup of the group were organizational and political, personal and material. The Danish group pursued a life of its own (like ostriches, Dotremont complained, in contrast to the French, who were often more like giraffes with their heads held high in the air); the Dutch and the Belgians began to drift to Paris, and Paris in turn began to absorb elements of COBRA back into the mainstream; personal difficulties (Jorn went off with Constant's wife) threatened to divide close friends. The COBRA artists were often literally starving. Jorn described in a letter to Dotremont how he and his family were forced to "sleep on the floor so that we don't have to buy a bed" in a studio without gas or electricity. Both Jorn and Dotremont suffered from tuberculosis, a disease promoted and aggravated by poverty, and at the time of COBRA's dissolution they were both hospitalized in the same clinic in Denmark.

But political problems played a part too. The COBRA artists were militant in the Communist party (Dotremont) or sympathetic to it, even if inactive (Constant, Jorn). But the brief heyday of the Liberation was soon halted by the tightening grip of Stalinism and the beginnings of the Cold War. When COBRA was formed and held its first exhibition in March 1949, it had friendly relations with the Communist parties. COBRA was able to maintain contact with the parallel ex-surrealist Bloc group in Czechoslovakia even after the 1948 seizure of power by the Communists in Prague. But, in 1949, with the persistence of the Berlin blockade, the formation of NATO, the declaration of the Federal Republic of Germany, and the ever-increasing pressure against Tito from the Soviet

Union, Revolutionary Surrealist and COBRA artists began to feel themselves squeezed, caught in an untenable position. Later that year Dotremont tried unavailingly to stake out a claim for artistic autonomy at the Communist-controlled Salle Pleyel peace congress in Paris, and in November matters came to head at the COBRA exhibition in Amsterdam at the Stedelijk Museum. The wave of purges and show trials had already begun in Eastern Europe, and Dotremont's second attempt, at an experimental poetry reading, to clarify his political position led to barracking, forcible ejections, and fistfights. "When the words *Soviet* and *Russian* were mentioned, that brought the house down. . . . There was an undescribable uproar, anti-Soviet jeers and anti-French insults flying." Or as he put it in his reading: "La merde, la merde, toujours recommencée."[53] COBRA found itself caught in the crossfire between Communists and anti-Communists.

Dotremont, Constant, and Jorn reacted to this dilemma in different ways. Dotremont eventually became disenchanted with politics altogether and began to take the first steps towards de-politicizing the movement. Constant and Jorn disagreed. In a world in which "politics are (not without our complicity) put between us and the Universe like barbed wire," it was all the more important to struggle to maintain a genuine and direct relationship between art and politics, to reject stultifying labels and ideological prejudices—"Experimentation in these conditions has a historical role to play: to thwart prejudice, to unclog the senses, to unbutton the *uniforms of fear.*"[54] However, Constant and Jorn interpreted this historical role differently. Constant began to move out of painting altogether, collaborating with the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck and then, after the dissolution of COBRA, moving to London and devoting himself to research into experimental urbanism and city planning. Constant sought an art that would be public and collective in a way that easel painting could never be, a transposition into contemporary terms of the idea of the communal, festive use of space (fig. 3.12). Jorn persisted in painting after his recovery from tuberculosis, but was eager to find a way of reviving the COBRA project in a purer, more advanced form: a hope realized with the foundation of the SI after his meeting with Debord (in many ways, a second Dotremont, less problematic in some ways but, as it turned out, in others more).

Looking back at the COBRA movement, it is possible now to see many points of similarity between COBRA attitudes and those of Jackson Pollock or Willem de Kooning (who often looks like a displaced mutant of Dutch COBRA). Pollock, like Jorn, extolled the spontaneous, the vital, the ornamental (in Jorn's sense of the "arabesque"). His background too was in political mural art, which he rejected for a new approach, indebted to surrealism but departing from it.[55] Like Jorn he was influenced by indigenous ritual art—Indian sand painting and totems rather than Viking runes and ancient petroglyphs. Pollock's *Blue Poles* can be measured with Jorn's great *Stalingrad* now in the Silkeborg Museum. If Jorn always resisted the pull of abstraction, it was largely because of his political commitment, the quest for an art that would be neither bourgeois, Stalinist (social realist), or surrealist. Art, for Jorn, should always retain both the social and the realist poles or else it would be undialectical, one-sided, metaphysical. Jorn's experience of the Resistance and the vicissitudes of the Cold War in Europe prevented the headlong slide into individualist abstraction of his American counterparts (ideologically counterposed to Soviet social realism in Cold War terms).

3.12
Constant
Ontwerp voor een Zigeunerkamp
(Model for a Gypsy Camp), 1958

After leaving a Swiss sanatorium in 1954, Jorn began to visit Italy for his health and because it was relatively a cheap place to live. Indefatigable as ever, he had founded MIBI while still in the clinic, and soon he was able to combine some of the old COBRA artists with new Italian friends, drawn first from the Nuclear Painting movement led by Enrico Baj, and then (after 1955) the group gathered around Pinot-Gallizio in Alba. This new venture of Jorn's began after he was approached by the Swiss artist, Max Bill, who had been given the job of setting up the new Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, which was planned as a "new Bauhaus." At first, Jorn was enthusiastic about the project but he soon found himself in violent disagreement with Bill, who was linked to the "concrete art" movement of geometrical abstractionists and wanted the new Bauhaus to provide training in a technological approach to art, an updated rerun of the old productivist model. Soon Jorn was writing to Baj that "a Swiss architect, Max Bill, has been given the job of restructuring the Bauhaus where [Paul] Klee and [Wassily] Kandinsky taught. He wants to reproduce an academy without painting, without any research in the field of the image, fictions, signs and symbols, simply technical instruction."[56] As the references to Klee and Kandinsky suggest, this was in many respects a repeat of the controversies that had divided the old Bauhaus when László Moholy-Nagy was appointed and productivism triumphed.

Jorn was in favor of an ideal Bauhaus that would bring together artists in a collective project, in the spirit of William Morris or the Belgian socialist, Van der Velde, who had inspired Walter Gropius. But he was resolutely opposed to functionalism and what he regarded as a moralistic rationalism that threatened to exclude spontaneity, irregularity, and ornament in the name of order, symmetry, and puritanism. The polemic against the technological thinking of Bill brought Jorn to formulate a theoretical and polemical counterattack on the grounds of general aesthetics and urbanism. At the 1954 Triennale of Industrial Design in Milan, Jorn engaged in public debate with Bill on the theme of "Industrial Design in Society."[57] Jorn argued that the Bauhaus and Le Corbusier had been revolutionary in their day, but they had been wrong in subordinating aesthetics to technology and function, which had inevitably led towards standardization, automation, and a more regulated society. Thus Jorn began to venture into areas that brought him closer again to Constant, as well as to the members of the LI, who were simultaneously developing their own theories of unitary urbanism, psychogeography, and *dérive*.

V

In 1955 Jorn met Pinot-Gallizio, a partisan during the war who was then an independent Left councilman in his hometown of Alba and shared Jorn's interests in popular culture and archaeology. Together they set up an Experimental Laboratory as a prototype Imaginist Bauhaus, libertarian (without teachers or pupils, but only coworkers), aiming to unite all the arts, and committed to an anti-productivist aesthetic. In this context, Pinot-Gallizio began to develop his new experimental paints and painting techniques, drawing on his background as a chemist, and Jorn began to devote himself to collaborative works in ceramics and tapestry, seeking a contemporary style for traditional crafts and expanding his painting to new materials and forms. The next year, Pinot-Gallizio and Jorn organized a conference in Alba, grandly entitled the "First World Congress of Free Artists," which was attended by both Constant and Gil J Wolman, who was representing the LI (Debord himself did not attend). Wolman addressed the Congress, proposing common action between the Imaginist Bauhaus and the LI, citing Jorn, Constant, and the Belgian surrealist Marcel Mariën approvingly in his speech, as well as expounding the idea of unitary urbanism. The stage was now set for the foundation of the SI.

Besides a common approach to urbanism, there were other issues that linked Jorn, Pinot-Gallizio, and Constant with the LI: a revolutionary political position independent of both Stalinism and Trotskyism (and their artistic correlates, social realism and orthodox surrealism), a dedicated seriousness about the theory and goals of art combined with an unswerving avant-gardism, and a common interest in the transformation of everyday life, in festivity, in play, and in waste or excess (as defined by the norms of a purposive rationalism). The journal of the LI was called *Potlatch* after the great feasts of the Northwest Coast Indians of Canada and Alaska, in which the entire wealth of a chief was given away or even "wastefully" destroyed. Described by Franz Boas (and his native informants) and then by Marcel Mauss in his classic *The Gift*, the idea had fascinated both Bataille and Lefort of *Socialisme ou barbarie*, who reviewed Mauss's book in *Les temps modernes* when it was reissued after the war. Potlatch was taken to exemplify the opposite of an exchange or market economy—objects were treated purely as gifts rather than as commodities in the setting of a popular feast.[58] Generosity and waste rather than egotism and utility determined their disposal.

The theme of festivity is linked, for Jorn, with that of play. In his 1948 essay, "Magi og Skønne Kunster" (Magic and the fine arts), Jorn observed that "if play is continued among adults in accordance with their natural life-force, i.e., in retaining its creative spontaneity, then it is the *content* of ritual, its humanity and life, which remains the primary factor and the form changes uninterruptedly, therefore, with the living content. But if play lacks its vital purpose then ceremony fossilizes into an empty form which has no other purpose than its own formalism, the *observance of forms*." Festivity is thus ritual vitalized by play. In the same way, the formal motif of art must be vitalized by the creative figure, the play of calligraphy. This concept of play linked Jorn closely to Constant, who was deeply influenced by Johan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*, published in Holland just before the war.[59] Huizinga argued that man should be seen not simply as *homo faber* (man as maker) or *homo sapiens* (man as thinker) but also as *homo ludens* (man as player). He traces the role of play both in popular festivities and in art—in the rhythms of music and dance, as well as masks, totems, and "the magical mazes of ornamental motifs." Huizinga's thought converged in France with

that of Roger Caillois, who also made the link to festival and thence to leisure: "*Vacation* is the successor of the festival. Of course, this is still a time of expenditure and free activity, when regular work is interrupted, but it is a phase of *relaxation* and not of *paroxysm*."[60] Play too had a crucial place both in Breton's thought and Sartre's. In the background, of course, was Friedrich Schiller's celebration of play in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man.*

In 1957 the SI was proclaimed at Cosio d'Arroscia and the collaboration between Jorn and Debord was sealed by the publication of a jointly composed book (a successor both to COBRA's "writing with two hands" and Lettrist *metagraphie).* This work, *Fin de Copenhague*, like *Mémoires* (see fig. 7.1–7.5) published two years later in 1959, was both a *détournement* of found images and words and a piece of impromptu, spontaneous, collective work in the festive spirit.[61] The common ground between the different currents in the SI was reinforced and enriched by theoretical publication in the group's journal and by joint artistic projects. These established both an enlarged aesthetic scope and a clarified political direction to which all the parties could contribute. The next task was to make a dramatic intervention in the art world and this was achieved in 1959, when both Jorn and Pinot-Gallizio held exhibitions in Paris in May, and Constant at the Stedelijk in Amsterdam later that year.

Jorn's show of *Modifications* was intended, in a startlingly original manner, to position his work not only within the Situationist context of *détournement*, but also between Jackson Pollock and kitsch (the two antinomic poles proposed by Clement Greenberg, who valued them as good and evil respectively) in a gesture that would transcend the duality of the two. In his catalogue notes Jorn stressed that an art work was always simultaneously an object and an intersubjective communication, a sign.[62] The danger for art was that of falling back into being simply an object, an end in itself. On the one hand, Pollock produced paintings that were objectified traces of an "act in itself," through which he sought to realize his own self in matter for his own pleasure, rather than as the realization of an intersubjective link. The action of painting failed to be effective as an act of communication. On the other hand, the anonymous kitsch paintings that Jorn bought in the market were merely objects in themselves with no trace of subjective origin at all, simply free-floating in time and space. By overpainting them in his own hand, Jorn sought to restore a subjectivity to them, to reintegrate them into a circuit of communication, a dialectic of subject and object.[63]

Jorn characterized Pollock as an oriental painter (on the side of abstract ornament) and the kitsch works as classical (on the side of representation, both idealizing and naturalistic). In the past, Jorn had himself taken the side of the oriental against the classical. Thus he commented on the *Laocoön*, "Laocoön's fate—the fate of the upper class," identifying the snakes (the serpentine, oriental line) with the natural, the materialist, the revolutionary classes, and the representation of Laocoön (the classical form) with the ideal, with repression and sublimation. However, in the case of his own *Modifications*, Jorn characterized his project as nordic rather than oriental, going beyond the oriental/classical antinomy. Here the nordic, separated out and set over and against the oriental, implied the use of symbolic motifs rather than the abstract ornament. Thus the paintings were magical actions that revitalized dead objects through subjective inscription, transforming them into living signs (collectively appropriated motifs, which were also spontane-

ously subjective figures). The kitsch paintings were not simply *détournées* but were sacrificial objects in a festive fertility rite. Objectified beings were broken open, vandalized, and mutilated to release the "becoming" latent within them.

At the same time, Jorn saw the *Modifications* as a celebration of kitsch. It was only because kitsch was popular art that a living kernel could still be found in it. In his very first contribution to the Danish art magazine *Helhesten*, during the war, Jorn had written in praise of kitsch in his essay "Intimate Banalities" (1941). Jorn wanted to get beyond the distinction between high and low art. While his sympathies were always on the side of the low in its struggle against the high, Jorn also wanted to unite the two dialectically and supersede the split between the two, which deformed all human subjectivity. In this article he praised both the collective rage for celluloid flutes that swept a small Danish town (trivial, yet festive) and the work of a tattoo artist (an ornamental supplement, both mutilation and creation, like that of the *Modifications* themselves). Further, in combining high with low, Jorn also wanted to deconstruct the antinomy of "deep" and "shallow." In "Magi og Skønne Kunster," he had long previously remarked how "today we are unable to create general artistic symbols as the expression of more than a single individual reality. Modern artists have made desperate attempts to do this. The basic problem is that a general concept must be created by the people themselves as a communal reality, and today we do not have that kind of fellowship among the people which would allow that. If the artist has plumbed the depths, like Klee, he has lost his contact with the people, and if he has found a popular means of expression, like [Vladimir] Mayakovsky, he has, in a tragic way, betrayed the deeper side of himself, because a people's culture which combines the surface issues with the deeper things does not exist." Thus, for Jorn, the deconstruction of antinomies could only be fully realized through social change, but in the meantime artistic gestures like those of the *Modifications* could symbolically enact their possibility and thus help form the missing fellowship (see the four following color plates).

Finally, for Jorn, revitalization was also revaluation. The act of modification restored value as well as meaning. Here, Jorn returned implicitly to the Marxist theory of value, which he was to develop in a personal way. Jorn (in a way reminiscent of Bataille's postulate of a "general economy" that incorporated a domain of excess excluded from the "restricted" economy of exchange and utility) reformulated the Marxist formula C-M-C into the expanded N-U-C-M-C-N-U (nature-use-commodity-money) as the basis for a socialist economy in which the economic cycle was contained in the natural cycle, transforming "economic utility" into "natural use."[64] Jorn always insisted that Marxism was not simply the theory of exploitation as the general form of extraction of a surplus, because a surplus was necessary for socialist society if it was to go beyond functionalism and utility to excess and luxurious enjoyment, the social forms of creative, playful ornament. Socialism was ultimately based on natural rights, and the realm of freedom could only be attained by reintegrating history into nature. Thus the transformation of paintings as commodities (objects bought in the market) into sites of spontaneous, natural creativity—the revaluation of exchange value as natural use value—was itself a prefiguration of a truly communal society.

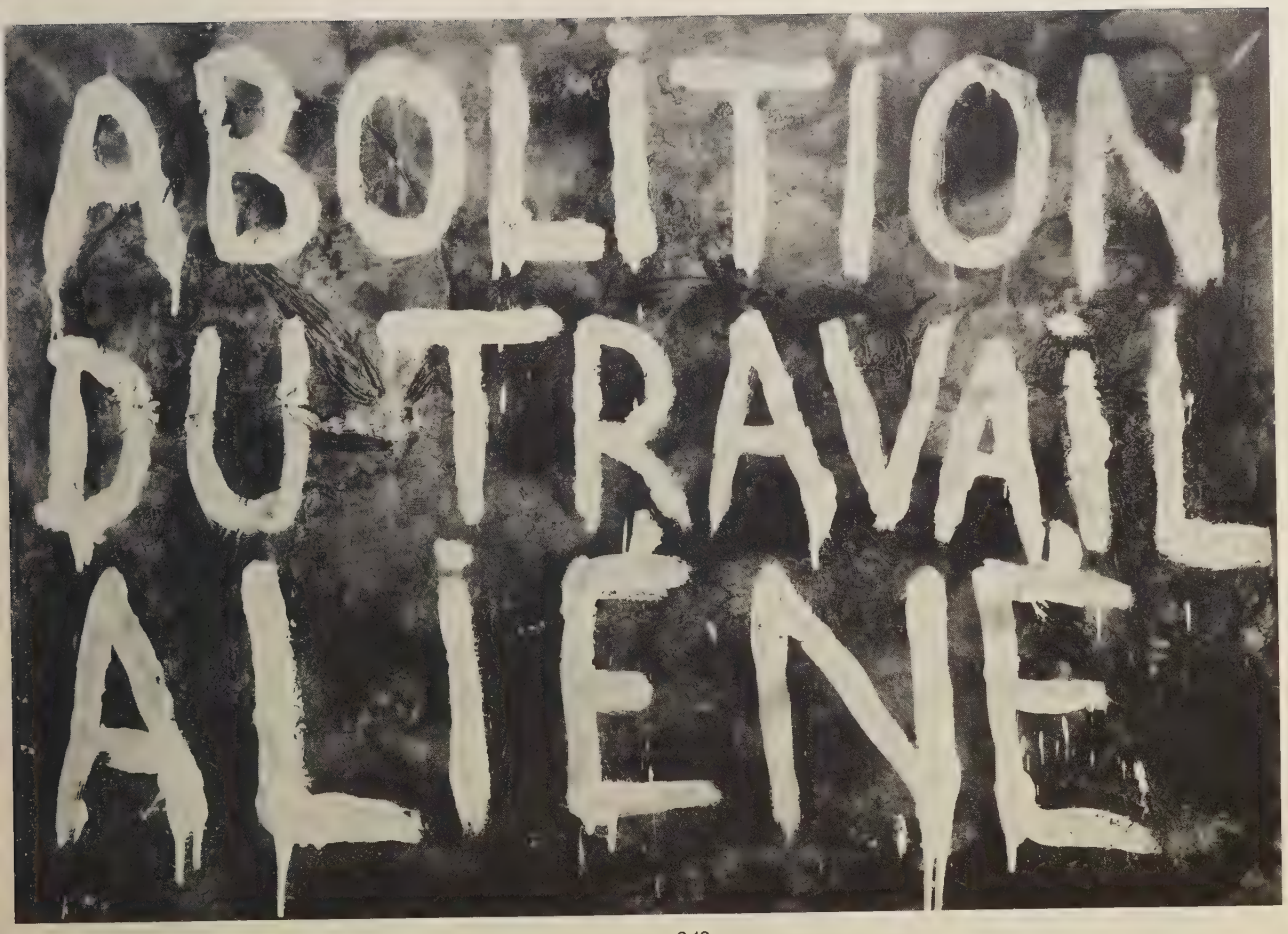
Pinot-Gallizio and Constant followed different paths. Rather than seeking like Jorn to reinscribe unalienated

Asger Jorn
L'avant-garde se rend pas (The Avant-Garde Doesn't Give Up), 1962

Asger Jorn
Le pêcheur (The Fisherman), 1962

Asger Jorn
Paris by Night, 1959

Asger Jorn
Lockung (Temptation), 1960

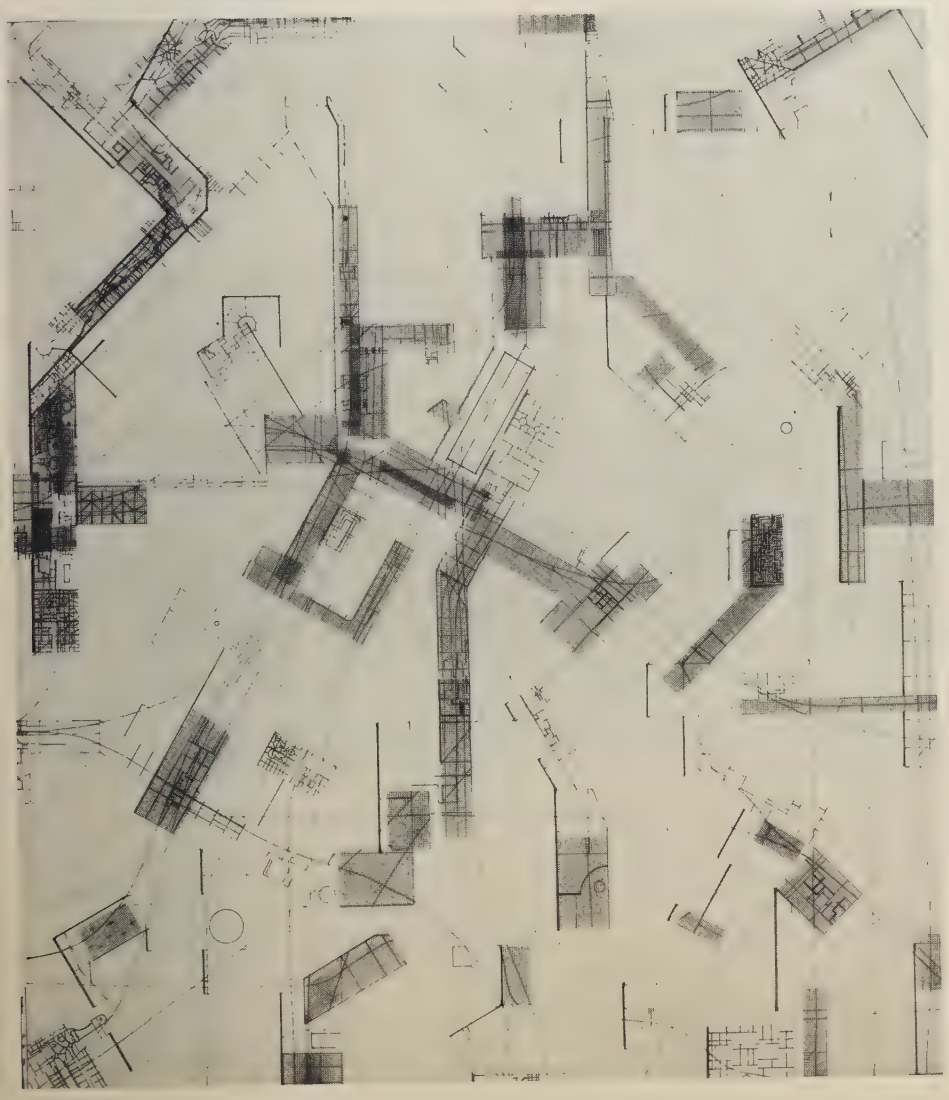


3.13
Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio/Guy Debord
Abolition du travail aliéné
(Abolition of Alienated Labor)

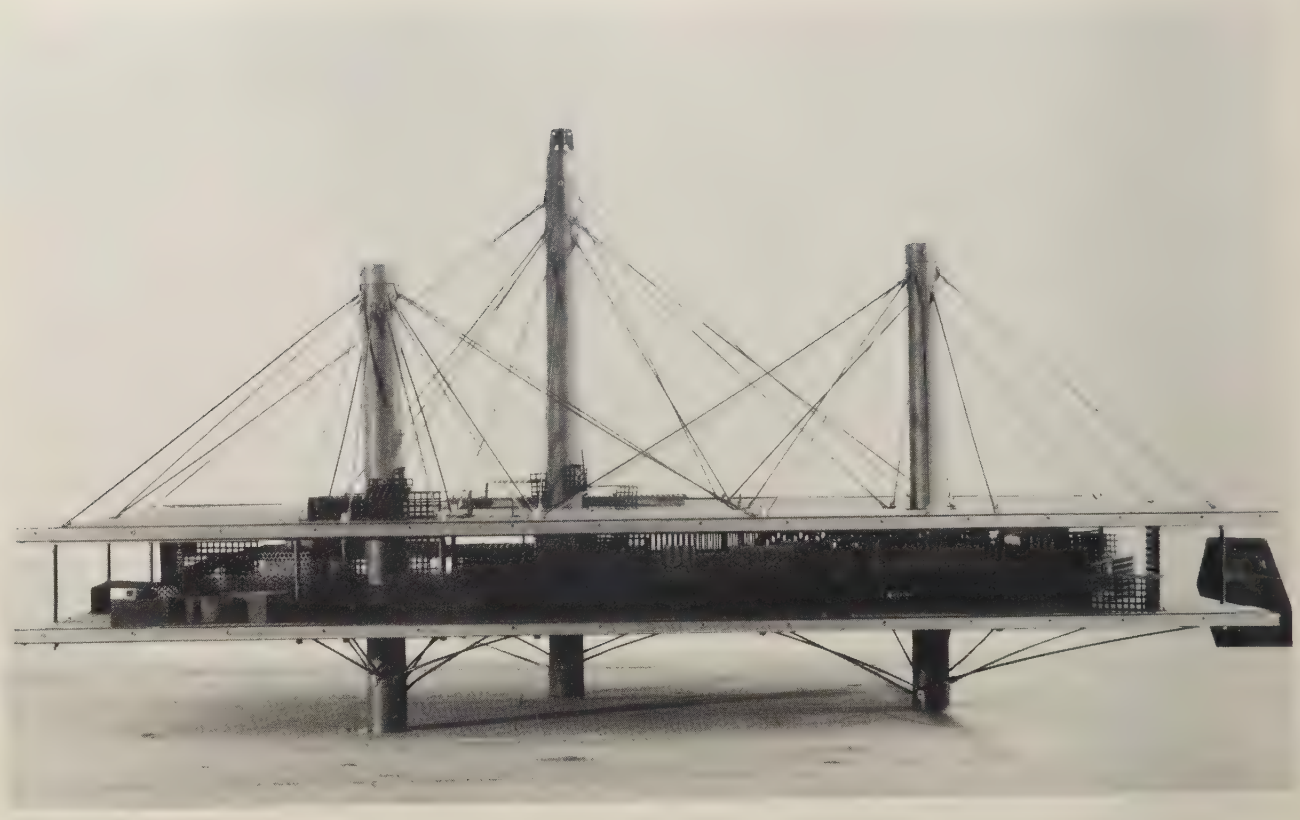
3.14
Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Pittura industriale
(Industrial painting),
Installation photograph,
Musée national d'art moderne,
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989

creativity into easel painting itself, albeit in an original, dialectical form, they each began to push beyond the limits of easel painting. For Pinot-Gallizio the economy of standardization and quantity, of unending sameness, must be superseded by a civilization of "standard-luxury," marked by unending diversity. Machines would be playful, in the service of *homo ludens* rather than *homo faber*. Free time, rather than being filled with banality and brainwashing, could be occupied in creating brightly painted *autostrade* (freeways), massive architectural and urbanistic constructions, fantastic palaces of synesthesia, the products of "industrial poetry," and sites of "magical-creative-collective" festivity (fig. 3.13). His exhibition in Paris was designed as the prototype cell of such a civilization. The gallery was draped all over (walls, ceiling, and floor) with paintings produced by Pinot-Gallizio's pioneering techniques of "industrial poetry" (fig. 3.14). The exhibition was to use mirrors and lights to create the effect of a labyrinth, filled with violent colors, perfumes, and music, producing a drama that would transform visitors into actors. Pinot-Gallizio's aim, encouraged by Debord, was to create in one ambiance a premonitory fragment of his totalizing futurist vision.[65]

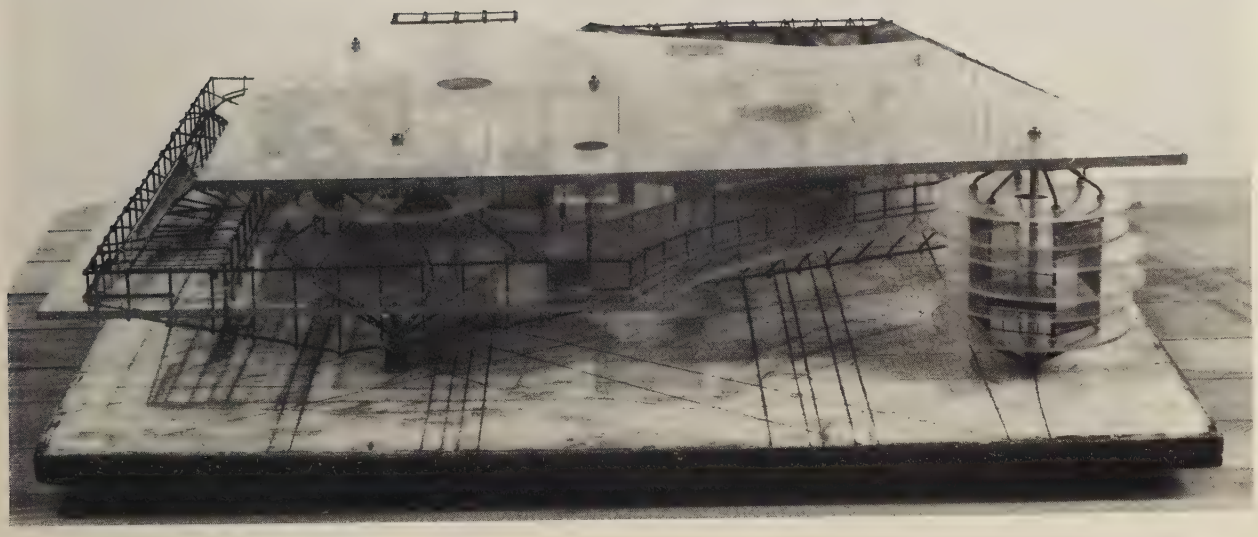
Constant's *New Babylon* project was similar to Pinot-Gallizio's in its conceptual basis but very different in its style. In his 1959 essay "Le grand jeu à venir" (The great game to come), Constant called for a playful rather than functional urbanism, a projection into the imaginary future of the discoveries made by the Lettrist method of *dérive*, drifting journeys through actually existing cities to experience rapid, aimless changes of environment (ambiance) and consequent changes in psychological state (fig. 3.15).[66] Constant had been inspired by Pinot-Gallizio, who had become the political representative of the gypsies who visited Alba, to build a model for a



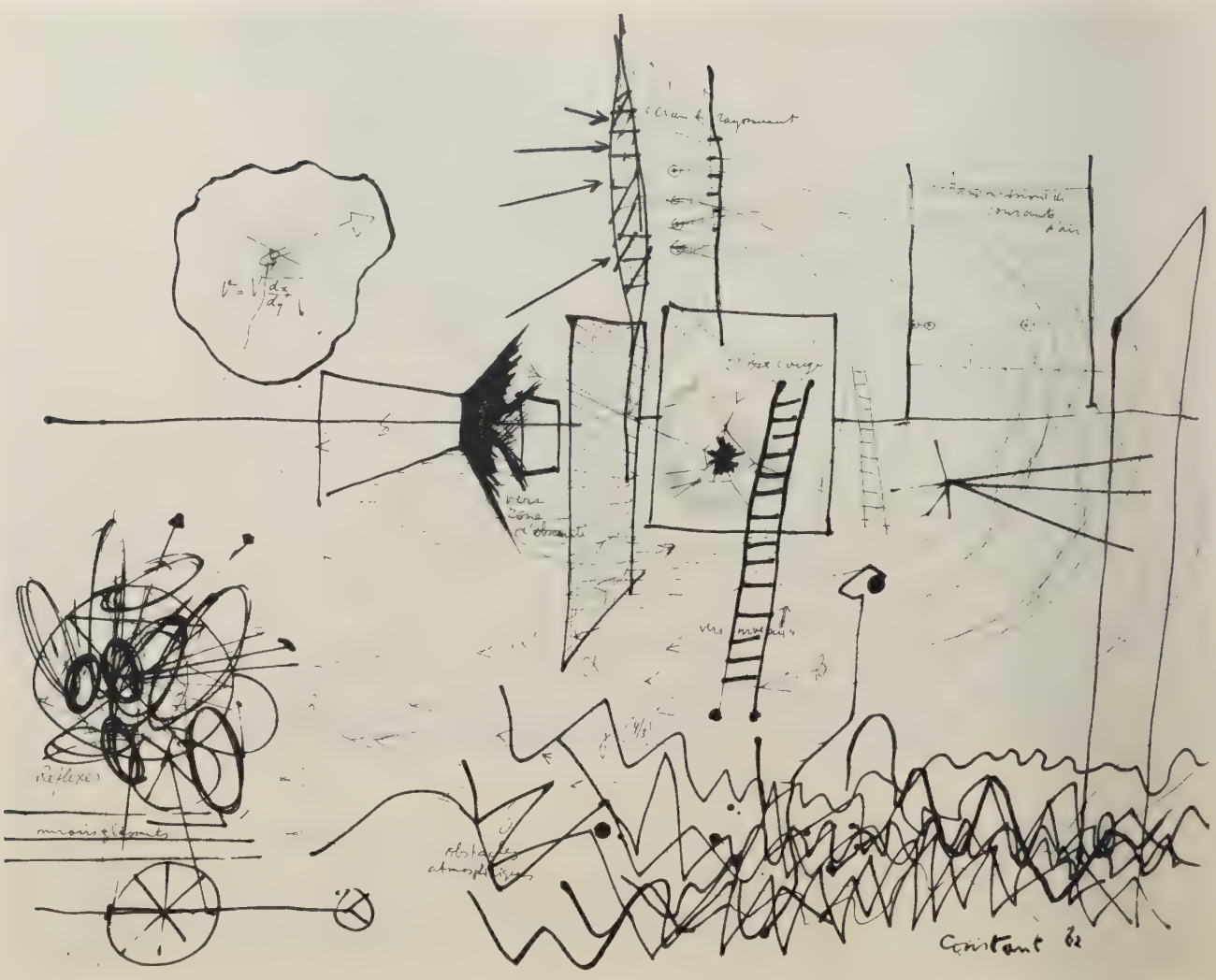
3.15
Constant
Labyratoire
(Labyratory), 1962



3.16
Constant
Hangende Sector
(Hanging Sector), 1960



3.17
Constant
Gele Sector
(Yellow Sector), 1958



3.18
Constant
Groep Sectoren
(Group Sector), 1962

nomadic encampment (see fig. 3.12). From this he developed to building architectural models of a visionary city (New Babylon), as well as making blueprints, plans, and elevations, moving out of painting altogether (fig. 3.16 and 3.17). Skeptical of the prospect of immediate political change, Constant set about planning the urban framework for a possible postrevolutionary society of the future. New Babylon was devised on the assumption of a technologically advanced society in which, through the development of automation, alienated labor had been totally abolished and humanity could devote itself entirely to play. It would be the ceaselessly changing, endlessly dramatic habitat of *homo ludens*, a vast chain of megastructures, each of which could be internally reorganized at will to satisfy the desires of its transient users and creators (fig. 3.18).[67]

Thus the SI launched itself into the art world, in Paris and Amsterdam, with exceptional ambition and bravura. Not only were the works formally pathbreaking, pushing up to and beyond the limits of painting, but their stakes, their theoretical engagement, went far beyond the contemporary discourse of art and aesthetics in its implications. It would be easy to look at Jorn's *Modifications*, for instance, as premonitions of postmodern "hybridity," but this would be to miss their theoretical and political resolve, their emergence out of and subordination to Jorn's general revolutionary project. There had not been such a fruitful interchange between art, theory, and politics since the 1920s. Yet, despite this, the Situationist intervention in the art world hardly lasted a year. In the summer of 1960 Pinot-Gallizio was expelled (he died in 1964) and Constant resigned, both as a result of disagreements and denunciations stemming from contacts they and/or their associates made in the art world outside the framework of the SI. In April of the next year, 1961, Jorn resigned as part of the upheaval that led to the schism of 1962, when Nash and the German SPUR group of artists (who had joined in 1959) were ousted and set up the dissident Second Situationist International and Situationist Bauhaus, which have lasted until the present, maintaining the project of a Situationist art, with vivid flares of provocation and festivity.[68]

The denial by Debord and his supporters of any separation between artistic and political activity, which precipitated the schism, led in effect not to a new unity within Situationist practice but to a total elimination of art except in propagandist and agitational forms. In fact, the SI simply reappropriated the orthodox Marxist and Leninist triad of theory, propaganda, and agitation that structured Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?* while making every effort to avoid the model of leadership that went with Leninism. Theory displaced art as the vanguard activity, and politics (for those who wished to retain absolutely clean hands) was postponed until the day when it would be placed on the agenda by the spontaneous revolt of those who executed rather than gave orders. *Mirable dictu*, that day duly came to the surprise of the Situationists as much as anyone else, and the uprising was ignited, to an extent, by the impact of the preceding years of theoretical practice. The problem remained that the revolutionary subjectivity that irrupted into the objectified "second nature" of the society of the spectacle came from nowhere and vanished again whence it came. In terms of Situationist theory it represented a paroxysmic expansion and collapse of consciousness, detached from the historical process that faced the subject (before, during, and after) as an essentially undifferentiated negative totality.[69]

In a strange way the two legendary theoretical mentors of 1968, Debord and Louis Althusser, form mirror images of each other, complementary halves of the ruptured unity of Western Marxism. Thus Debord saw a decline in Marx's theory after the *Communist Manifesto* and the defeats of 1848, while Althusser, conversely, rejected everything before 1845. (They could both agree to accept the *Manifesto*, but otherwise near-total breakdown!) For Debord, everything after 1848 was sullied by an incipient economism and mechanism; for Althusser everything before 1845 was ruined by idealism and subjectivism. For Debord, the revolution would be the result of the subjectivity of the proletariat, "the class of consciousness." "Consciousness" had no place in Althusser's system, nor even subjectivity—he postulated a historical "process without a subject." When, after the defeat of 1968, both systems disintegrated, Leftists abandoned the grand boulevards of Totality for a myriad *dérives* in the winding lanes and labyrinthine back streets. Too many got lost.

The publication in France of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1960) and Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (1962) provided the basis for two fundamentally opposed totalizing myths: that of a rationalist pseudo-objectivity and that of an imaginary pseudo-subjectivity respectively, to be combatted on the terrain of Marxism by two antagonistic crusades, one precisely for a true revolutionary subjectivity (Debord) and the other for a true revolutionary objectivity (Althusser), each vitiated by the idealism and rationalism the other denounced.[70] One was, so to speak, abstractly romantic, the other abstractly classical. The unfulfilled dialectical project that remains (one that Jorn would have relished) is evidently that of rearticulating the two halves, each a one-sided development to an extreme of one aspect of the truth. Yet that one-sidedness is itself the necessary outcome of the pursuit of totality, with its concomitant critique of separation and refusal of specificity and autonomy. Ironically, Lukács's own analysis of the "society of manipulation" in *Conversations with Lukács*, published in 1967, the same year as *Society of the Spectacle*, takes up many of the same themes as Debord's book without the philosophical maximalism of Debord's own Lukácsianism.[71] We need to remember, too, André Breton's concept of the workbench and his insistence that compatibility is sufficient grounds for solidarity without the need to erase difference and totalize the protean forms of desire.

In 1978 Debord returned to the cinema to make *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni*, like his previous work a collage of found footage but with a sound track that is simultaneously an autobiographical, a theoretical, and a political reflection. He remembers Ivan Chtcheglov (the first formulator of unitary urbanism) and pays tribute to his dead comrades, Jorn and Pinot-Gallizio. He recapitulates the story of Lacenaire in Marcel Carné's classic film *Les enfants du paradis* (The children of paradise), long the object of his identification, like Dr. Omar and Prince Valiant.[72] He does not regret that an avant-garde was sacrificed in the shock of a charge: "Je trouve qu'elle était faite pour cela."[73] Avant-gardes have their day and then, "after them operations are undertaken in a much vaster theatre." The Situationist International left a legacy of great value. The wasteful luxury of utopian projects, however doomed, is no bad thing. We need not persist in seeking a unique condition for revolution, but neither need we forget the desire for liberation. We move from place to place and from time to time. This is true of art as well as politics.

Notes

1. For the history of the SI, see Mirella Bandini, *L'estetico il politico: Da Cobra all'Internazionale situazionista, 1948–1957* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1977), which also reprints a number of crucial documents, and Jean-Jacques Raspaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer, *L'Internationale situationniste: Chronologie/Bibliographie/Protagonistes (Avec un index de noms insultés)* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972), which, as the title indicates, includes much useful information. The full run of the SI journal is collected in *Internationale situationniste, 1958–69* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1975), and the "official" history of the movement is by Jean-François Marios, *Histoire de l'Internationale situationniste* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1989). In English, see Ken Knabb, ed. and trans., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981).

2. For COBRA, see Jean-Clarence Lambert, *Cobra*, trans. Roberta Bailey (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), and *Cobra, 1948–1951* (Paris: Association française d'action artistique, 1982), the catalogue of the exhibition held at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris (9 December 1982–20 February 1983). For the prehistory of the SI, see Gérard Berreby, ed., *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale situationniste* (Paris: Editions Allia, 1985). For Lettrism, see the self-presentation in Isidore Isou, *De l'impressionisme au lettrisme* (Paris: Filipacchi, 1974). See also Greil Marcus, *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) for an erudite and devoted account of Lettrism and its aftermath in the SI.

3. See Berreby, *Documents*, passim, and the journal of the SI, especially the first issue, for definitions. See also "Definitions" at the end of this volume.

4. See Guy Debord, *Rapport sur la construction des situations et les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale,* in Berreby, *Documents,* pp. 607–19.

5. For group photographs, see the SI journal, passim.

6. The standard works on Jorn are the three volumes authored by Guy Atkins (with Troels Andersen), *Jorn in Scandinavia, 1930–1953* (New York: George Wittenborn, 1968), *Asger Jorn: The Crucial Years, 1954–1964* (New York: Wittenborn Art Books, 1977), and *Asger Jorn: The Final Years, 1965–1973* (London: Lund Humphries, 1980). See also Troels Andersen, *Asger Jorn* (Silkeborg: Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, 1974) and, for the *Modifications,* see Asger Jorn's essay "Peinture détourné," in *Vingt peintures modifées par Asger Jorn,* exhibition catalogue (Paris: Galerie Rive Gauche, 1959); for a translation, see "Detourned Painting" in the section of Situationist documents in this volume, "A Selection of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World."

7. For Pinot-Gallizio's *Cavern of Anti-Matter,* see Bandini, *L'estetico il politico.*

8. For material on Constant, see Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*, and Constant [Nieuwenhuys], *New Babylon* (Den Haag: Gemeente Museum, 1974).

9. For the history of the "Nashist" Second Situationist International after the split, see Carl Magnus and Jörgen Nash et al., *Situationister i Konsten* (Sweden: Bauhaus situationniste, 1966) and the defense in Stewart Home, *The Assault on Culture* (London: Aporia Press and Unpopular Books, 1988).

10. For Debord's films, see Guy Debord, *Contre le cinéma* (Aarhus, Denmark: L'Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé/Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie, 1964) and *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1978), which both contain full versions of the scripts of films made up to the date of publication. Sadly, the films themselves have been withdrawn by their maker. For an account of the place of Debord's films in the history of French experimental cinema, see Dominique Noguez, *Eloge du cinéma experimental: Définitions, jalons, perspectives* (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1979). See also Tom Levin's essay, "Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord," in this volume.

11. Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967). An unauthorized American translation was made by Fredy Perlman, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1970, repr. 1977 and 1983).

12. Georg Lukács's *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* first appeared in Berlin in 1923. Sections were translated into French in *Arguments*, nos. 3, 5, and 11, and a full French translation, *Histoire et conscience de classe,* was published in Paris in 1960. An English translation was not to appear for many years; see *History and Class Consciousness,* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1971).

13. The journal *Socialisme ou barbarie* first appeared in Paris in 1949 and ran for forty numbers until it ceased publication in 1965. For a brief account of the group, see Dick Howard, *The Marxian Legacy* (London: Macmillan, 1977)—bearing in mind the implications of the word *legacy*—

and, more importantly, the republication of Cornelius Castoriadis's writings for the journal in his two-volume *Cornelius Castoriadis: Political and Social Writings,* ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). The history of the group is also retold from the point of view of a participant (with much hindsight) by Jean-François Lyotard in his *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

14. See Mustapha Khayati, *De la misère en milieu étudiant* (Strasbourg: Union nationale des étudiants de France, Fédérative générale des étudiants de Strasbourg, 1966). This key text was widely and rapidly translated into many languages in pamphlet form and served as the main means by which Situationist ideas were introduced into the student movements. For an English translation, see Christopher Gray, *Ten Days That Shook the University: The Situationists at Strasbourg* (London: Situationist International, 1967).

15. See especially the last issue of the SI Journal, *Internationale situationniste* 12 (September 1969). For a rival viewpoint, refer to Edgar Morin and Claude Lefort et al., *Mai 1968: La brèche* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), with contributions from the founders of *Socialisme ou barbarie*. For an English account sympathetic to the Situationist milieu, see Angelo Quattrocchi and Tom Nairn, *The Beginning of the End: France, May 1968* (London: Panther, 1969), and for a retrospective history with a number of comments on the impact of Situationist ideas, see Ronald Fraser et al., *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988).

16. For Debord's own account of the aftermath of 1968, see *La véritable scission dans l'Internationale* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972) with its withering dismissal of the "pro-situ" wannabees of the period. For a concerned critique of the "simulationist" art boom of the eighties and its debt to the dry husks of Situationist thought, see Edward Ball, "The Beautiful Language of My Century," *Arts* 63 (January 1989), pp. 65–73 [Due to editorial error, this issue of *Arts* was mistakenly printed as *Arts* 65, no. 5 (January 1988) and may be catalogued as such—ED]. The most significant attempt to make use of Situationist graphic techniques within a militant political framework, reviving the tradition of agit and poster art, has been in the work of Jamie Reid, especially during the *Suburban Press* and Sex Pistols periods. For Jamie Reid, see *Up They Rise: The Incomplete Works of Jamie Reid* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) with texts by Jamie Reid and Jon Savage.

17. Karl Korsch's *Marxismus und Philosophie* was first published in Leipzig in 1923, with the first English translation (with an introduction by Fred Halliday) published in London in 1970; for the American edition, see *Marxism and Philosophy,* trans. Fred Halliday (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971). Korsch, like Lukács, was translated into French by the *Arguments* group.

18. Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (Paris, Editions Grasset, 1947). A second edition was published by L'Arche in 1958 with an extensive new introduction. In the interim Lefebvre had been compelled to make a self-criticism by the French Communist party, which he left after the Budapest uprising of 1956. An English translation, *Critique of Everyday Life*, is forthcoming from Verso in London (Autumn 1990).

19. For the *Arguments* group, see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975). After leaving the Communist party, Lefebvre became an editor of *Arguments*. In due course, the group was unsparingly denounced by the SI.

20. For the Left Bank culture of the period, see Ed van der Elsken, *Love on the Left Bank* (London: André Deutsch, 1957) and Guillaume Hanoteau, *L'âge d'or de Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (Paris: Denoël, 1965), which provide an appealing photographic and anecdotal record. For a somewhat more scholarly account, see Paul Webster and Nicholas Powell, *Saint-Germain-des-Prés* (London: Constable, 1984).

21. Note also that for Debord the construction of situations was to be a collective activity.

22. Debord was able to totalize the partial critiques of "consumerism" that were typical of the period within a Marxist framework that also took account of the increased power and scope of the media.

23. See Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: NLB, 1976) and Russell Jacoby, *Dialectic of Defeat: Contours of Western Marxism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). These two critical histories, taken together, provide an excellent "stereoscopic" view of Western Marxism. Martin Jay's *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) provides an extremely thorough and illuminating overview, but for a reader interested in the SI, which Jay relegates to the status of footnotes to Lefebvre, it must be supplemented by, for instance, Richard Gombin's *The Origins of Modern Leftism,* trans. Michael K. Perl (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1975) and *The Radical Tradition: A Study*

in Modern Revolutionary Thought (London: Methuen, 1978), which unashamedly put politics in command of philosophy.

24. For Bogdanov, see Robert C. Williams, *The Other Bolsheviks: Lenin and His Critics, 1904–1914* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1986), which is also useful on Pannekoek, Gorter, and Roland-Holst; also important is Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). See also Gombin, *The Radical Tradition.* Jacoby, in *Dialectic of Defeat,* cites Korsch's observation that the postwar disputes in which he and Lukács were involved were "only a weak echo of the political and tactical disputes that the two sides" (by which Korsch meant Lenin, on the one side, and Pannekoek and Gorter, on the other) "had conducted so fiercely some years before."

25. I have not been able to find a good history of syndicalism, although Phil H. Goodstein, *The Theory of the General Strike from the French Revolution to Poland* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 1984) is full of interesting material. A number of books deal obliquely with the subject and there are also several national case studies.

26. See Lyotard, *Peregrinations* and Dick Howard's interview with Castoriadis in *Telos* 23 (Spring 1975).

27. The major issue in the split between Castoriadis and Debord seems to have been Debord's insistence on the abolition of labor. See *Internationale situationniste* 4 (June 1960) and 6 (August 1961).

28. See Lukács, *Histoire et conscience de classe.* My translation is from the French edition (which Debord used), translated by Kostas Axelos and Jacqueline Bois (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1960).

29. For an account of Lefebvre's political and philosophical career, see Jay, *Marxism and Totality.*

30. See André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Michigan University Press, 1969) and Henri Lefebvre's introduction to the second edition of *Critique de la vie quotidienne,* 2 vols. (Paris: L'Arche, 1958). The habit of vitriolic denunciation of ex-comrades was inherited by the SI and mars a great many of their pages. The reader often feels relieved that these writers never enjoyed real public power or influence.

31. See Jay, *Marxism and Totality.*

32. See Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France: La bataille de cent ans.* Vol. 2, *1925–1985* (Paris: Seuil, 1986). This staggeringly informative work is indispensable for an understanding of French culture far beyond the bounds of psychoanalysis.

33. Both Mark Poster and Martin Jay fail to understand the importance of surrealism. Neither Perry Anderson nor Russell Jacoby pay any attention to Breton and most of the standard discussions of Marxist "aesthetics," let alone "politics," prefer to steer rapidly away.

34. Within the Western Marxist tradition, Walter Benjamin was also greatly indebted to surrealism.

35. The standard history of surrealism remains Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Macmillan, 1965), which has been recently reprinted by Harvard University Press (1989). Helena Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism* (New York: Paragon House, 1988) provides a detailed chronicle of surrealist political activity.

36. From Rodchenko's memoirs, quoted in Vahan D. Barooshian, *Brik and Mayakovsky* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978). I have written about Soviet productivism elsewhere; see my *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso Editions and NLB, 1982).

37. For the background to Lukács's Marxism, see Jay, *Marxism and Totality*; Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: NLB, 1979); and Gareth Stedman Jones, "The Marxism of the Early Lukács: An Evaluation," *New Left Review* 70 (November–December 1971), reprinted in New Left Review, ed., *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader* (London: NLB, 1977). For Breton and Freud, see Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse.*

38. See Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism.*

39. See André Thirion, *Revolutionaries without Revolution*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Macmillan, 1975).

40. Debord's early interest in psychogeography reflects the influence of a traditional scientistic psychology. See, for instance, P.-H. Chombart de Lauwe, *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne,* 2 vols. (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1952), which, despite its dedication to Marcel Mauss, relies on conventional statistical and empirical methods. It is also full of marvellous maps (which can also be seen plagiarized in the pages of the SI journal).

41. André Breton, *Les vases commicants* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970 [1933]).

42. Breton's Hegel was eventually superseded by Kojève's—even among those who had undergone Breton's influence.

43. A *détournement* of Lacan.

44. The Lettrists returned to dadaism and "modernized" dadaist techniques in the name of artistic research, while maintaining the dadaist penchant for scandal.

45. See the last issue of the SI journal, *Internationale situationniste* 12 (September 1969). For the Situationists and Enragés at Nanterre, see also René Viénet, *Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968). This book also contains many examples of Situationist comic strips, posters, and graffitti.

46. See *Le jardin d'Albisola*, text by Ezio Gribaudo, Alberico Sala, and Guy Debord (Turin: Edizioni d'arte Fratelli Pozzo, 1974); for a translation of Debord's text, "On Wild Architecture," see the section of Situationist documents, "A Selection of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World," in this volume. Jorn wrote the introductory essay for Debord's *Contre le cinéma*, where he compares Debord to Godwin.

47. See Lambert, *Cobra*.

48. See Jens Jørgen Thorsen, *Modernisme* (Copenhagen: Thaning & Appel, 1965). Thorsen was a leading figure in the Second Situationist International.

49. See Graham Birtwistle, *Living Art: Asger Jorn's Comprehensive Theory of Art between Helhesten and Cobra (1946–1949)* (Utrecht: Reflex, 1986). This extremely important book gives a comprehensive account of Jorn's thought and writings during the formative pre-COBRA years and offers a number of insights on how these developed later. It draws extensively on both published and unpublished manuscripts. For a full bibliography of Jorn, see Per Hoffman Hansen, *A Bibliography of Asger Jorn's Writings* (Silkeborg: Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, 1988).

50. P. V. Glob's *The Bog People: Iron Age Man Preserved*, trans. Rupert Bruce-Mitford (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969) is a work of great charm and distinction that provides an English-language introduction to his writings. He contributed to many journals with which Jorn was associated.

51. For Dotremont, see the works on COBRA cited in note 2 above, and José Vovelle, *Le surréalisme en Belgique* (Brussels: A. de Rache, 1972). Belgian surrealism developed independently from French surrealism and was divided between various groups, relatively depoliticized like those around Magritte and heavily politicized, as was Dotremont.

52. Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) was the first pioneering study of the interlock between the art market, art movements, and global political power. Another such study is badly needed to bring the story up to the present.

53. See Lambert, *Cobra*.

54. Ibid.

55. Jorn had studied with Léger, as Pollock had with Benton and Siqueiros.

56. Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*.

57. Ibid.

58. See *Potlatch, 1954–1957* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1985), reprint of the journal of the Lettrist International.

59. *Homo Ludens* was published in Haarlem in 1938, then translated into German and published in Switzerland in 1944. The German translation was then retranslated into English and synthesized with Huizinga's own incomplete English-language version (made shortly before his death in 1945), and this new English version was published in London in 1949. A French translation was published in Paris in 1951. For the most recent American edition, with an introduction by George Steiner, see Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

60. Denis Hollier, ed., *The College of Sociology, 1937–39* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). See also Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1961).

61. *Fin de Copenhague* was republished in Paris by Editions Allia in 1985; it is also reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 553–92. For *Mémoires*, see Marcus, *Lipstick Traces* and his article in this volume, "Guy Debord's *Mémoires*: A Situationist Primer."

62. See Jorn, "Peinture détourné" and Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*.

63. For another sympathetic view of kitsch from within the Marxist tradition, see Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenberg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1988).

64. See Asger Jorn, *Critique de la politique economique* (Paris: Internationale situationniste, n.d. [1960], summarized in Gombin, *The Radical Tradition*.

65. Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*. Among later painters, both Merz and Pistoletto were influenced by Gallizio early in their careers and pay tribute to him in Mirella Bandini's monograph.

66. Ibid. For a bibliography of Constant, see Lambert, *Cobra*.

67. For Constant's influence, see Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), which cites the Beaubourg museum in Paris as a spin-off.

68. In 1961, Jorn, Nash, and Strid founded the Bauhaus situationniste in Sweden. In February 1962, the SPUR group was expelled from the SI, followed by the Nash group in March. These expelled groups then formed the kernel of the Second Situationist International, founded later the same year. The Bauhaus situationniste still thrives, continuing to produce publications, sponsor events, and agitate for a Situationist path in art under the guidance of Nash and Strid. The Second SI has been a more notional body but has never been dissolved.

Nash, of course, is the doyen of Danish poets and his unflagging energy has kept the standard of artistic rebellion flying, not only through these organizations, but also through the journal *Drakabygget* and his involvement with the Co-Ritus group (with Thorsen and others) and the Little Mermaid scandal. See Carl Magnus and Jörgen Nash et al., *Situationister i Konsten*, cited in note 9 above. In his forward to the book, Patric O'Brian [Asger Jorn] writes as follows: "The anti-art of the late 1950s and early sixties stated that visual art was a useless medium for creativity and thinking. It was the radiation of art into pure existence, into social life, into urbanism, into action and into thinking which was regarded as the important thing. The start of situationism, the foundation of the First Internationale Situationniste in 1957, was a reflection of this thinking. The motto 'Réaliser la Philosophie' [*sic*] was a starting point for Situationist anti-art. But it caused also violent discussions in the First Situationist International. Opposing this point of view, Strid, Nash and Thorsen, among others, in 1962 founded the Second Internationale Situationniste. These five Situationists, Strid, Prem, Thorsen, Magnus, Nash, are all aiming to place art in new social connections. They are fully aware of the possibilities of artistic radiation. Far from creating any feeling of anti-art in their minds, this point of view gives visual arts a far more central position in their experiments."

Also associated with the Second SI was Jacqueline de Jong, who produced the *Situationist Times*. She was one of the few women closely associated with the Situationists, who, like other avant-garde groups, marginalized, undervalued, and overlooked women both in their circle and in society at large. Indeed, the SI journal blatantly reproduces images of women as "spectacle."

69. Although the SI itself dissolved soon after 1968, the fallout spread far. American groups flourished in Detroit, New York, and Berkeley, where Ken Knabb's anthology (see note 1 above) and Isaac Cronin and Terrel Seltzer's videotape, "Call It Sleep," helped popularize Situationist ideas in the radical community. In England, Situationist graphics were popularized within art colleges affected by the 1968 occupations and thence infiltrated the popular music scene. Jamie Reid's triumphantly subversive Sex Pistols polyptych ensures that the Punk debt to the Situationists will not be forgotten. See also Marcus, *Lipstick Traces*.

70. See Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), for a lucid account of the trajectory of Althusser and Althusserianism.

71. See Georg Lukács (with Heinz Holz et al.), *Conversations with Lukács*, ed. Theo Pinkus (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975). For comparison, see Guy Debord's de-Lukácsized *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1988), which is closer to the late Lukács.

72. Dr. Omar is the "Doctor of Nothing" played with such languorous disdain by Victor Mature in von Sternberg's *Shanghai Gesture*. Prince Valiant is the comic strip hero, evidence of a chivalresque bent on the part of Guy Debord—somewhat unexpected but consonant with his conception of a fraternal avant-gardism, militant and pure, devoted to the quest for the Grail of council communism.

73. Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*. Debord's work in the cinema concludes with this film, the last image of which bears the subtitle, "A reprendre depuis le début" ("To be recommenced from the start").

Asger Jorn

and the Situationist International

Troels Andersen

When Asger Jorn in 1955 decided to seek closer contact with members of the French group of intellectuals called the Lettrist International (LI), it was no casual decision. It was part of a continuous search.[1]

Since the early 1930s Jorn had constantly occupied himself with questions concerning the interaction between the fields of social and political science and art. He was politically educated by an old Danish anarcho-syndicalist leader, Christian Christensen, from whom he inherited a strong, critical sense of the more dogmatic Communist approaches as they flourished in the thirties and forties. He also gained a firsthand knowledge of the ideas of Marx and Engels in the shape in which they had made their way into the European workers' movement at the beginning of the century.

Later in the thirties, in France, Jorn directly experienced the events of the Popular Front as well as the Spanish Republican movement. During the Nazi occupation of Denmark (1940–1945) he avoided being swept up in the arrests of Communist party members in 1942 and he took part in printing the illegal resistance paper of the party between 1944 and 1945.

Immediately after the war he began to work on a large theoretical work in an attempt to widen the traditional Marxist analysis of art.[2] He was eager to discuss his views with leading Scandinavian intellectuals and later, between 1947 and 1948 in France, with such prominent figures as Breton, Picasso, and Eluard, with whom he got into personal contact.

Jorn was a driving figure in the discussions that led to the formation of the short-lived Revolutionary Surrealist movement. The political pressure that followed the reactionary wave in the USSR spread to Western Europe and led to new, hardline positions on cultural matters inside the Communist parties between 1947 and 1948. Jorn in vain attacked this development wherever he could. In a follow-up to the abortive Revolutionary Surrealist

movement, Jorn took the initiative to form a loose artists' forum, COBRA (1948–1951), centered around a series of publications and an international journal. Attempts to include the Czech group RA in the movement failed owing to political developments in Czechoslovakia, and the COBRA group remained a West and Northwest European episode, although of considerable impact. In COBRA, Jorn continued to underline the dual character of artistic and political action, voting against their amalgamation; for him, art and politics were independent and therefore interacting forms of social activity.

After the breakdown of COBRA, Jorn in 1954 continued his efforts to form a forum of debate and exchange of ideas, now in the so-called MIBI (International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus), joined mainly by a small group of Italian artists. At that time Jorn lived in North Italy. MIBI, among

4.1
Cosio d'Arroscia, Italy, 1957

other issues, campaigned against the facile character of individual mass products of design and their role in everyday life.

It was in an attempt to widen this forum that in 1955 Jorn approached the International Lettrists, whose critique of the historical and theoretical claims of the orthodox Lettrist group led by Isidore Isou Jorn agreed with. Jorn immediately recognized one of the members of the group, Guy Debord, as a driving force and a valuable partner in discussions. Jorn had moved to Paris, and from 1955 onward they met frequently.

After initial attempts, a unification conference was held in Italy in 1957 (fig. 4.1), and MIBI and the LI merged to form the Situationist International (SI). Jorn decided to publish his essays and pamphlets from the MIBI period in book form under the title of *Pour la forme* (1958).[3] On the back page of the cover the publication of a new magazine, *Internationale situationniste*, was first announced. Jorn took part in editing and financing the magazine from 1958 until mid-1961. In 1957, he invited Debord on a trip to Denmark. As a double act of friendship they paid a visit to Christian Christensen and were photographed with him. In Copenhagen they managed to produce a book in twenty-four hours together with Jorn's friend, the lithographer and printer V. O. Permild.[4]

In Silkeborg, Jutland, Jorn introduced Debord to his plans for a future museum collection, and an ambitious scheme for a documentation center on the SI was drawn up by Debord. Some documents were forwarded on their return to Paris, but it was left for Jorn to continue these efforts. A somewhat exaggerated note on the museum appeared in the group's magazine. Debord, however, fully recognized the importance of Jorn's previous work and the movements that he had inspired or passed through as pre-Situationist elements. This was reflected in the plan for a library section that he drew up later for the Silkeborg Museum.

Jorn continued to regard Debord as a pivotal figure, comparing his role to that of Breton in the previous generation, as he declared in his book *Signes gravés* in 1964.[5] In 1961, Jorn "demissioned" from the SI, as he told me at the time with a candid smile and a turn of his cigar. His resignation was an unexpected move; however, he did continue to financially support the magazine for some time to come. Jorn followed the same pattern as he formerly had during the period of the art magazine *Helhesten* in Denmark (during the occupation) and in planning the COBRA journal. An intense exchange of views, limited in time, was more attractive to him than dogmatic persistence and whatever comes from that.

4.2
Asger Jorn
Le lac des canards (The Duck Lake)

Early in 1962, Jorn planned together with Debord a new magazine, *Mutant*, directed against the atomic threat. A joint leaflet announcing the publication was printed, but nothing else came out of the effort. A late, surprising product of Jorn and Debord's connection was an essay by the latter entitled "De l'architecture sauvage." It was written about 1970 (but dated 1972) for a book on Jorn's house and garden in Italy, with ceramics, tiles, and frescoes inside and outside, carried out in an almost Gaudian spirit.[6] And yet it is not so surprising—in Jorn's archives in Silkeborg we find a little group of amateur photographs from the now classical example of "wild architecture": the Palais Idéal, built by a postman in southern France. On their reverse sides the photographs carry the stamp of "l'Internationale lettriste." In one of them Debord stands under the inscription "where the dream becomes reality."

In Jorn's oeuvre two exhibitions mark his relations with the SI—*Modifications* in 1959 and *Nouvelles défigurations* from 1962.[7] Debord received a fine sample of these ironic and sharp paintings as a gift from Jorn. Still today, thirty years after their creation, the *Modifications* (fig. 4.2) act as provocative and challenging questions, taking the unprepared spectator by surprise. They brilliantly sum up the essential quality of the SI at the height of its power.

Notes

1. Jorn has written a large number of theoretical texts. See Per Hoffman Hansen, *A Bibliography of Asger Jorn's Writings* (Silkeborg: Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, 1988).

2. Cf. Graham Birtwistle, *Living Art: Asger Jorn's Comprehensive Theory of Art between Helhesten and Cobra (1946–1949)* (Utrecht: Reflex, 1986).

3. See Asger Jorn, *Pour la forme: Ebauche d'une méthodologie des arts* (Paris: L'Internationale situationniste, 1958).

4. Asger Jorn, *Fin de Copenhague* (Copenhagen: Permild & Rosengreen, 1957); this work was republished under the same title by Editions Allia in Paris in 1985.

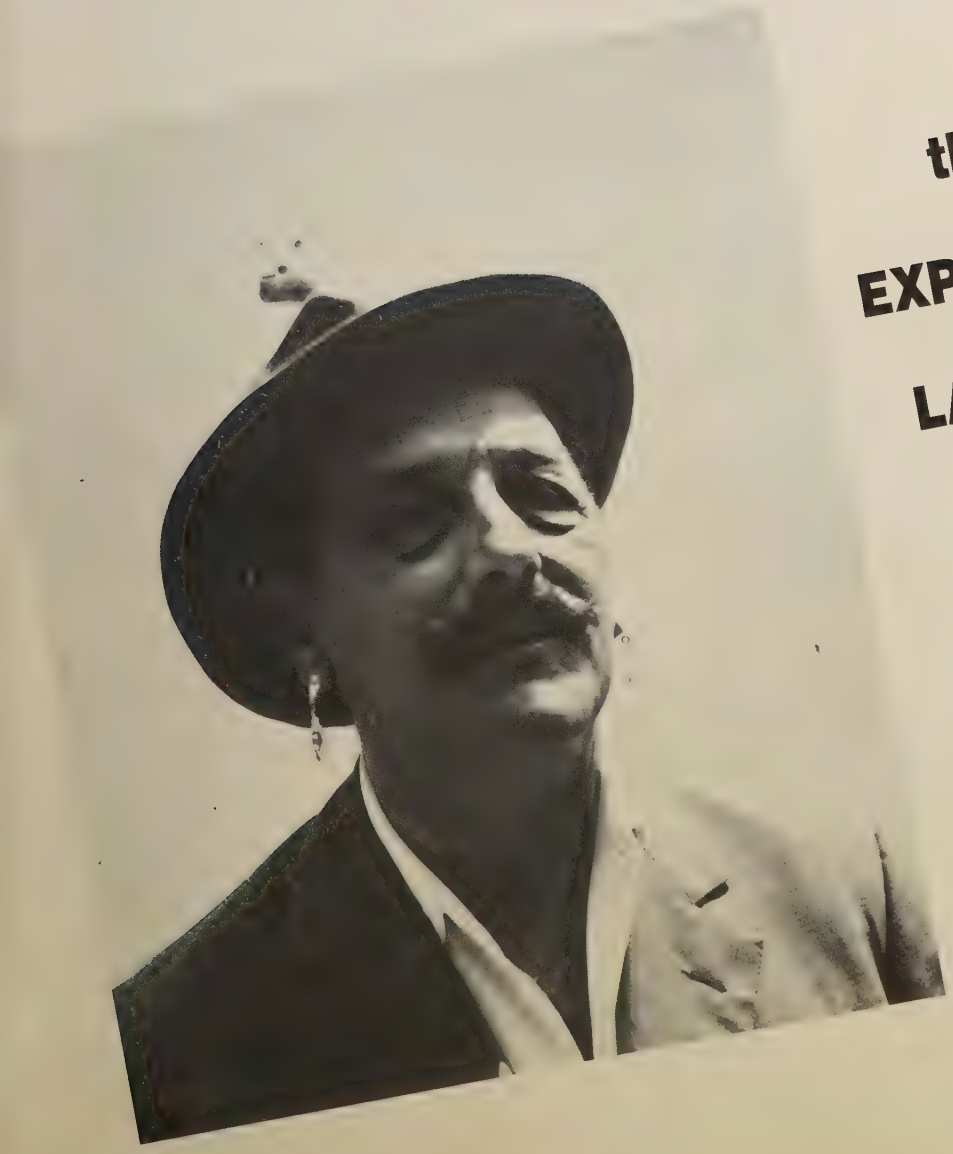
5. Asger Jorn, *Signes gravés sur les églises de l'Eure et du Calvados* (Copenhagen: Editions Borgen, 1964), p. 294. In 1964 Jorn also published Guy Debord's book *Contre le cinéma* and wrote the preface for it.

6. See *Le jardin d'Albisola*, text by Ezio Gribaudo, Alberico Sala, and Guy Debord (Turin: Edizioni d'arte Fratello Pozzo, 1974); for a translation of Debord's text, "On Wild Architecture," see the section of Situationist documents, "A Selection of Situationist Writing: Imaginary Maps of the Real World," in this volume.

7. The standard works on Jorn's oeuvre, including many reproductions, remain the three volumes written by Guy Atkins (with Troels Andersen), *Jorn in Scandinavia, 1930–1953* (New York: George Wittenborn, 1968), *Asger Jorn: The Crucial Years, 1954–1964* (New York: Wittenborn Art Books, 1977), and *Asger Jorn: The Final Years, 1965–1973* (London: Lund Humphries, 1980). For the *Modifications*, see also the translation of Jorn's essay from the exhibition catalogue, "Detourned Painting," in the section on Situationist documents cited in note 6 above.

Mirella Bandini

an enormous and unknown chemical reaction:



the EXPERIMENTAL LABORATORY in ALBA

In the overall period preceding the establishment of the Situationist International (SI) in 1957, the Experimental Laboratory of the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (MIBI) in Alba constituted an important center, generating both ideas and actions.

In this small Piedmontese city, which was an ancient Ligurian center and later a Roman municipality with the name of Alba Pompeia, the laboratory was held in Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio's studio—in the capacious space, some thirty meters long, of a seventeenth century monastery.

The summer 1955 meeting between Pinot-Gallizio (fig. 5.1) (a scholar of popular culture, nomadism, and medicinal botany, as well as an archaeologist and painter) and Asger Jorn resulted in an important bond, leading after just a few months to the establishment in Alba of the Experimental Laboratory. Jorn had founded MIBI while staying in Villars Chesières in late 1953 and expanded its European base in 1954, bringing some of the members of the disbanded COBRA group into contact with Pinot-Gallizio and, for a brief period, with other Italian artists (Piero Simondo, Enrico Baj from the Nuclear Painting movement in Milan, and the architect Ettore Sottsass).

From 1955 on, the Alba laboratory of MIBI became a center of research, advancing the ideological plans already set forth by Jorn in COBRA. A few "free, experimental artists" worked in opposition to the rationalist and neo-constructivist currents of the time, re-evaluating the formerly surrealist domains of free expression, experimentation, and individualism.

Directed by Pinot-Gallizio, the laboratory became a propulsive center of European culture. It was the place where, in opposition to Max Bill's Hochschule für Gestaltung in Ulm, Jorn, together with Pinot-Gallizio, Baj, Sottsass, and Simondo (who called themselves "free, experimental artists" as opposed to "industrial designers"), focused on "imaginist" experiences with the use of varied materials and techniques, individually and as a group.

Pinot-Gallizio experimented with industrial painting, huge rolls of painted canvas intended to cover entire spaces, that was sold by the meter (fig. 5.2). This was to become the crux of the Situationist thesis concerning art objects that took over the environment in quantitative and collective production that would inflate the traditional value of such goods. In the laboratory's experiments, Pinot-Gallizio used resins, oil paints, and aniline substances mixed with sand and coal; Enrico Baj contributed an automatic technique and investigations into nuclear painting; Ettore Sottsass, his experience with architecture and form; Piero Simondo (with Elena Verrone), the methodological study of the problematics of art; and, finally, Walter Olmo investigated interventions in music.

Between 1955 and 1956, Asger Jorn prepared his important theoretical writings, a critique of functionalist aesthetics, the object, and architecture, which would later become part of his book *Pour la forme* (1958). Also in 1956, the Alba laboratory put out the first and only issue of *Eristica,* the journal of MIBI, with texts by Jorn, Simondo, and Verrone. Traveling constantly between Alba, Albisola, Paris, and Silkeborg, it was Jorn's extensive European contacts during this period that laid the foundation for subsequent developments, particularly his ties to the Lettrist International (LI).

In 1952 Guy Debord had split off from the Isou Lettrists and had formed the LI, a new radical group, with Gil J Wolman and Michèle Bernstein. Like Jorn, Debord attempted to achieve a cultural subversion whereby cultural and social issues would be inseparable; art and politics had to be addressed together. Beginning in 1952, the International Lettrists carried out a harsh critique of functionalist architecture and design in their journal, *Potlatch,* setting forth a theory of a link between behavior and a new architecture that would result in *urbanisme unitaire* ("unitary urbanism") and in the "construction of situations," a foundation of the theory of "going beyond art" that would then characterize the early period of the SI.

The collaboration between Debord's LI and MIBI in 1956 turned out to be an extremely complex amalgamation, rich in revolutionary elements for an alternative culture. As this union developed, the Alba laboratory laid the groundwork for the First World Conference of Free Artists, drawn together primarily through Jorn's contacts, which led to Constant's support for the movement.

The congress took place in Alba in September 1956, with Jorn defining its international character along the lines of the COBRA congresses, and the participants included representatives from eight nations (Algeria, Belgium, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Denmark, and Italy).

A spirited public debate ensued with a discussion of MIBI's new direction, the result of its joining forces with the LI. The subversion of cultural values and the development of behavior connected to an architecture that would address real-life situations (*urbanisme unitaire*), as opposed to rationalist functionalism, were issues of particular interest. At the same time, the *First Exhibition of Futurist Ceramics, 1925–1933* opened in Alba.

At the end of the congress, the Italians (Enrico Baj and Ettore Sottsass) withdrew from the movement. The final statement of the congress (published in the November 1956 issue of *Potlatch*) was based on the general agreement of MIBI with the program of *urbanisme unitaire*

5.2
Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Installation photograph,
Musée national d'art moderne,
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989

on the left:
Le temple des mécréants,
(The Temple of Miscreants), 1959

in center:
Pittura industriale
(Industrial Painting), 1959

on the right:
La notte cieca
(Blind Night), 1962

presented by the LI. In his diary, Pinot-Gallizio prophetically defined the Alba congress as "an enormous and unknown chemical reaction." Indeed, the congress contained the premises for the formation of the SI, which would be established the following year.

After the First World Congress of Free Artists, Constant became a member of MIBI and spent six months in Alba at Pinot-Gallizio's house. He stayed there until early 1957, preparing an urban plan for the city with a psychogeographic program of drifting labyrinthine routes (*dérives*) and designing a pavilion for the laboratory.

This period also saw the emergence of the first mobile architecture of *urbanisme unitaire*, which Constant realized in maquette form upon his return to Amsterdam: the *Accampamento degli Zingari* (Gypsy camp) with a system of mobile dividing walls adaptable to different numbers of inhabitants (see fig. 3.12).

Later, after the establishment of the SI in 1957, the exclusion of Simondo, Verrone, and Olmo reduced the Experimental Laboratory in Alba to Pinot-Gallizio and his son, Giors Melanotte. They were in close contact with Debord, Jorn, Constant, and the SPUR group, which often spent time in Alba. They prepared the *Caverna dell'antimateria* (Cavern of anti-matter), the first environment of industrial painting, with scrolls 145 meters long. They had group discussions about texts and leaflets, about positions taken; indeed, the laboratory continued to be a great forge of ideas and activities.

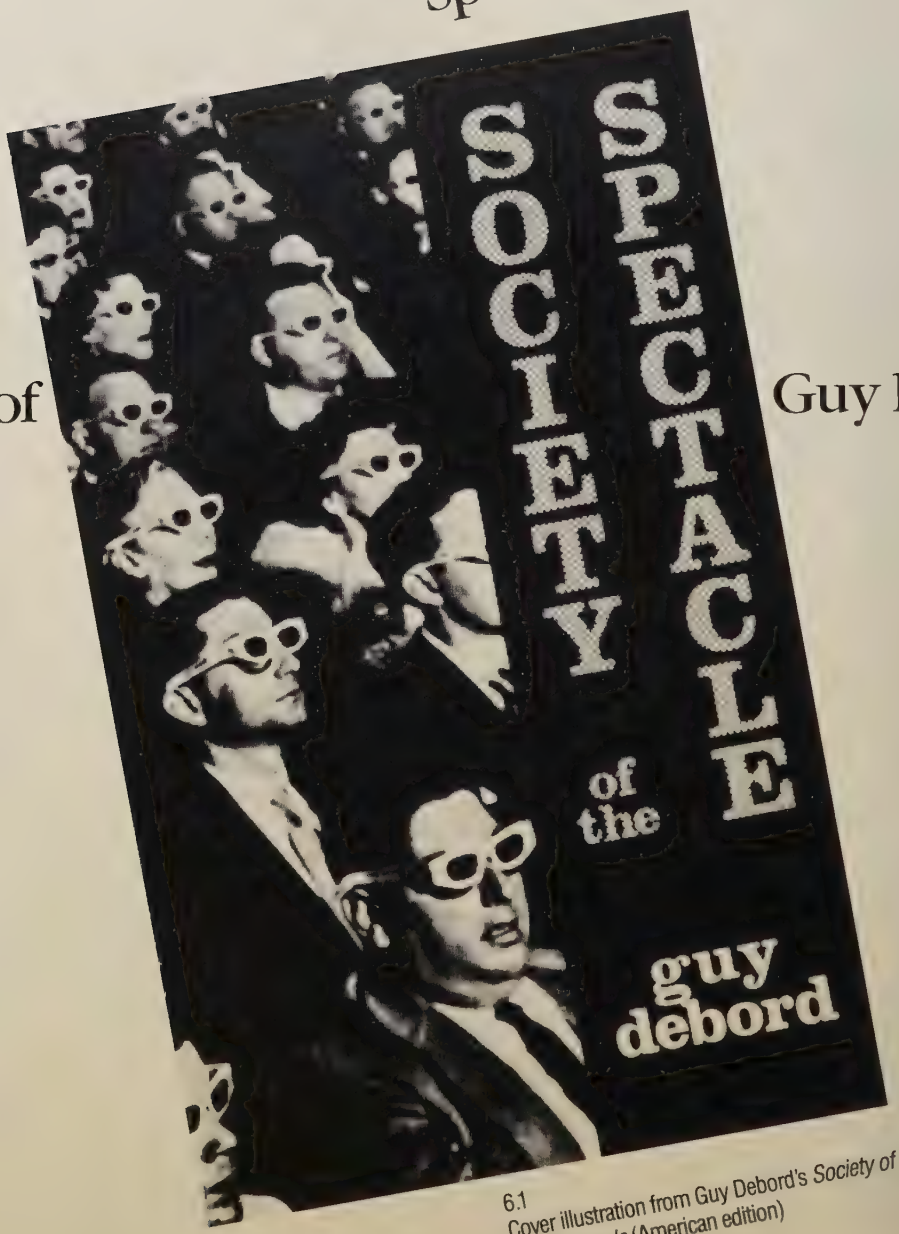
Pinot-Gallizio left the SI in 1960, following the exclusion of the entire artistic wing due to the movement's new political direction; he died a few years later, in 1964. But during those years his Alba laboratory continued to be a European center, frequented by Lucio Fontana, Michel Tapie, Wilhem Sandberg, and Karel Appel. Pinot-Gallizio's legacy of ideas and activities was passed on to a younger generation of artists in Turin who had known and spent time with him, such as Mario Merz and Michelangelo Pistoletto, and up to Giulio Paolini.

The affiliation of MIBI, propelled by Jorn, Pinot-Gallizio, and Constant's desire to theorize and create a new, active role for the artist in society (utterly opposed to the role of the designer in the service of industry) with Debord's LI (which proposed a revolutionary interaction between urbanism and behavior) formed the first revolutionary nucleus of the inexorable chain reaction that, in a series of detonating events, would eventually explode for the most part in May of 1968 in France.

Translated from the Italian by Marguerite Shore

Thomas Y. Levin

Dismantling the Spectacle: The Cinema of Guy Debord



6.1
Cover illustration from Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (American edition)

The only interesting undertaking is the liberation of everyday life, not only within a historical perspective but for us and right away. This entails the withering away of alienated forms of communication. The cinema, too, has to be destroyed.[1]

It is society and not technology that has made cinema what it is. The cinema could have been historical examination, theory, essay, memories. It could have been the film which I am making at this moment.[2]

I

Among the various social practices that serve Guy Debord as paradigmatic instances of what he calls the "society of the spectacle," the most often cited are without doubt television and cinema. Typical in this regard is the American edition of Debord's paratactic theoretical text *Society of the Spectacle* (hereafter referred to as *SoS*), where cinematic iconography dominates not only the front and back covers—which incorporate a photograph of spectators at a 3-D movie[3] (fig. 6.1)—but also continues throughout the volume in a series of illustrations located within the socketed frames of a film strip (fig. 6.2).[4] However, although cinema is certainly a privileged *figure* for the society of the spectacle, it is a mistake to assume that Debord's "spectacle" is synonymous with the "spectacularity" of the filmic medium. On the contrary, as is manifest from the very beginning of Debord's text, the theoretical concept of spectacle is used to designate a historical, socio-economic condition: "The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images" (*SoS*, Thesis 4).[5] For Debord, the spectacle designates a *Weltanschauung* (simply put, the alienation of late capitalism) that *manifests* itself in various spectacular phenomena, among them the cinema: "The world at once present and absent which the spectacle *makes visible* is the world of the commodity dominating all that is lived" (*SoS*, Thesis 37).

6.2
Film strip, illustration in *Society of the Spectacle* (American edition)

The confusion surrounding the "spectacle" is to some extent produced by a slippage in Debord's employment of the term. Sometimes it does refer to the realm of representation, as is evident in the structural analogy of the opening thesis of *SoS*:

> In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.

However, in the next thesis, Debord differentiates between "images of the world" and "the spectacle in general, [which] as the concrete inversion of life, is the autonomous movement of the non-living." Although this distinction itself merits a close and careful reading, for the present investigation it must suffice to say that the latter use of the expression is *allegorical*: "The spectacle, as the present social organization of the paralysis of history and memory, of the abandonment of history built on the foundation of historical time, is the *false consciousness of time*" (*SoS*, Thesis 158). The conflation in turn stems from Debord's rhetorical employment of the notion of spectacles qua images or representation to concretize his reading of "spectacle" as *the* allegory of late capital.

A characteristic instance of this strategy can be found among the illustrations in the journal *Internationale situationniste* (hereafter *IS*)—a rich collection of montage/collage work on pieces of commodity culture, including such *détournements*[6] as recaptioned or reworked advertisements, comic strips, newspaper photographs, problematic depictions of scantily clad women, illustrations from industrial manuals, graphs, and so forth.[7] In one of the last issues of the journal there is a reproduction of a magazine advertisement for German Eumig home movie cameras (fig. 6.3) whose text reads, "I LOVE MY CAMERA BECAUSE I LOVE TO LIVE: I record the best moments of life and revive them at will in all their richness." Underneath the image there is a caption entitled "The Domination of Life by the Spectacle" that reads as follows:

> This advertisement for Eumig cameras (Summer 1967) *evokes* very well the petrification of individual life which has reversed itself into a spectacular

LA DOMINATION DU SPECTACLE SUR LA VIE

Cette publicité de la caméra Eumig (été 1967) évoque très justement la glaciation de la vie individuelle qui s'est renversée dans la perspective spectaculaire : le présent se donne à vivre immédiatement **comme souvenir.** Par cette spatialisation du temps, qui se trouve soumis à l'ordre illusoire d'un présent accessible en permanence, le temps et la vie ont été perdus ensemble.

6.3
I Love My Camera Because I Love to Live, illustration in *Internationale situationniste* 2 (October 1967), p.57

6.3a
"London, September 1960: The Situationists at the cinema," illustration in *Internationale situationniste* 5 (December 1960), p. 8.

> economy: the present can now be lived immediately **as memory**. Time is submitted to the illusory order of a permanently available present and, through this spatialization of time, both time and life have been lost together.[8]

Here film functions not as the cause but as an illustration, an "evocation" or figure—albeit a privileged one—for a socio-political and epistemological shift that has taken place under late capitalism. An attitude toward the production of spectacle (home movies) is taken as a symptom of a "spectacular economy" (the temporality of an alienated social condition). As Debord puts it, years later, in a veiled reference to this advertisement: "When one loves life, one goes to the movies (fig. 6.3a)."[9]

The resistance to a facile collapsing of cinema and spectacle is imperative if one is to understand the complex relationship between the Situationist International (SI) and the filmic medium. To the extent that cinema is synonymous with spectacle—a spatialization of time, a staging of separation, a fostering of passivity, alienation, and so on—it is simply unacceptable and must be eliminated. Along with similar forms of spectacle, Debord insists that "the cinema, too, must be destroyed."[10] The question remains, however, to what extent the condemnation of cinema here is a critique of the politics of the "apparatus" analogous to arguments put forth by Martin Heidegger and later by Jean-Louis Baudry and Jean-Louis Comolli regarding the objectification inherent in the very structure of representation.[11] For it might be that what is at issue here is not the cinema as such, but rather a historically specific set of cinematic *practices*, a *certain cinema*—classic, commercial, industrialized, narrativized, and so forth. As Debord notes: "It is society and not technology that has made cinema what it is. The cinema could have been historical examination, theory, essay, memories."[12] This leaves open the possibility of an alternative sort of cinematic activity incompatible with the economy of spectacle, a nonspectacular, anti-spectacular, or other-than-spectacular cinema. Such a realm of possibility is the precondition of what one might call Situationist cinema.

The interest in film on the part of the SI must be understood in light of the significance in its genealogy of the artistic avant-garde: an important dimension of what could be called the "Situationist project" involved the production of (art)works. It was essential, however, that such works be critiques of the current historical moment and contain their own negation—that is, they should be in a sense anti-works. As Raoul Vaneigem phrased it in a statement put forth at the fifth SI conference in Göteborg, Sweden (August 1961):

> It is a question not of elaborating the spectacle of refusal, but rather of refusing the spectacle. In order for their elaboration to be *artistic* in the new and authentic sense defined by the SI, the elements of the destruction of the spectacle must precisely cease to be works of art. There is no such thing as *situationism* or a situationist work of art nor for that matter a spectacular situationist.[13]

Indeed, the conference members subsequently approved a suggestion by Attila Kotányi to call the products of such aesthetic activity on the part of the SI "anti-Situationist" given that truly Situationist conditions had yet to be realized. Similarly, Debord insists—in a formulation astonishingly reminiscent of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*—that "only the real negation of culture can preserve its meaning. It can no longer be *cultural*. Thus it is what in some way remains at the level of culture, but with a completely different meaning."[14] The contradictions and dangers of a radically negative cultural critique that nevertheless insists on the production of (anti)art objects were a topic of continuing polemical debate within the ranks of the SI. Yet they were very aware of what they themselves described as the

> . . . ambiguous and dangerous policy whose risks the SI had to run by consenting to act *in* culture while being against the entire present organization of this culture and even against all culture as a separate sphere. Nor is this most intransigent oppositional attitude and program any less ambiguous and dangerous because it nevertheless has to coexist with the present order.[15]

This strategic concession is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the SI's relationship to that most compromised medium, the cinema.

The first official articulation of the SI position on cinema occurs in a subsection of one of the first articles in the first issue of *IS* in 1958 entitled, indicatively, "For and Against the Cinema."[16] "Cinema is the central art of our society," the editorial begins, and the formal and anecdotal expression in the cinema as well as its material infrastructure are "the best *representation* of an epoch of anarchically juxtaposed inventions (not articulated but simply combined)."[17] But rather than making use of the extraordinary capacities opened up by its technical innovations, so the argument continues, the cinema offers a passive substitute to unitary artistic activity, an exponential increase in the reactionary power of nonparticipatory spectacle. The text makes it clear, however, that this could be otherwise:

> . . . those that want to construct this [new] world must simultaneously fight the tendency of cinema to constitute the anti-construction of situations (the construction of a slave atmosphere, the succession of the cathedrals) while recognizing the significance of the new technological developments (stereo sound, odorama) which are valuable in and of themselves.[18]

The opposite of a knee-jerk Luddite rejection of cinematic technology as such, the editorial attributes the reactionary state of the medium (the absence of avant-garde developments manifest in the plastic arts and in literature) to economic and ideological constraints, but also to the *social importance* of the medium. It is this importance, in turn, that makes it necessary that the medium remain in the control of the hegemonic class.

Instead of abandoning film as hopelessly contaminated, the article closes instead with a call for its appropriation. Cinema is likened to architecture (another major SI concern) in terms of its significance within daily life, the difficulties facing any attempt at its renovation, and the imperative for just such a transformation. This leads to the following conclusion:

> One must therefore struggle to appropriate a truly experimental sector within the cinema. We can envisage two distinct ways of using cinema: first, its employment as a form of propaganda in the pre-Situationist transition period; then its direct employment as a constitutive element of an actual situation.[19]

One could read this as the first, rough outline of a manifesto for an (anti)Situationist film practice.

To gain a more detailed understanding of the motivations behind the SI espousal of film as a revolutionary weapon, one must examine remarks scattered throughout their publications. In one of the more programmatic of these statements, the concluding section of the article "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action against Politics and Art," René Viénet argues that the SI must make use of the cinema—"the newest and without doubt most useful means of expression of our epoch"—as a didactic, analytic, and critical tool:

> Among other possibilities, the cinema lends itself particularly well to studying the present as an historical problem, to dismantling processes of reification. Historical reality can, of course, be apprehended, known and filmed only in the course of a complicated process of mediations. . . . This mediation would be difficult if the empirical existence of facts themselves was not already a mediated existence, which only takes on an appearance of immediateness because of and to the extent that, on the one hand, consciousness of the mediation is lacking and, on the other hand, the facts have been uprooted from the network of their determinations, placed in an artificial isolation and poorly linked together again by the montage of classical cinema. It is precisely this mediation which has been lacking, and inevitably so, in pre-Situationist cinema, which has limited itself to so-called objective forms or re-presentation of politico-moral concepts, whenever it has not been a merely academic type of narrative with all its hypocrisies.[20]

Viénet's conception of an SI film practice enlists the specific capacities of the medium (above all, photographic documentation, voice-over, and analytic montage) to expose the always already mediated status of the seemingly immediate and "natural" world constructed in classical, or pre-Situationist, cinema. The present is studied as a historical problem, history is recast as a problem of representation, and, above all, the practice of representation

itself is continuously subjected to critical interrogation. This staging of mediation takes the form of a work on other mediations, primarily by means of cinema's elective affinity to the important strategy of citation and reinscription referred to as *détournement.* Indeed, in a programmatic essay, the editorial collective of *IS* goes so far as to say that "the signature of the movement, the trace of its presence and its contestation in contemporary cultural reality . . . is first and foremost the employment of *détournement.*"[21]

It is in this capacity for visual-acoustic *détournement* that cinema finds its single most important justification as an instrument of SI activity. As Debord and Gil J Wolman confirm in their user's guide to this hallmark SI activity, among the various vehicles for *détournement* such as posters, records, radio broadcasts, and comic strips, none lends itself better than cinema: "It is obviously in the framework of the cinema that *détournement* can attain its greatest efficacity, and undoubtedly, for those concerned with this aspect, its greatest beauty."[22] As will become evident below, such *détournement* can take a number of forms. On the one hand, in the double movement of this "powerful cultural weapon" the context and meaning of both insignificant phenomena (newspaper clippings, advertisements, quotidian phrases) and significant elements (citations from Marx or Saint-Just, a sequence from an Eisenstein film) can be displaced and estranged before being subsequently reinscribed and transformed through radical juxtaposition.

On the other hand, entire films can be "detourned": Debord and Wolman propose *Birth of a Nation*, for example, because of its combination of formal innovations unprecedented in the history of cinema with a racist plot that is utterly intolerable. Rather than censoring it, they suggest, it would be better to detourn it as a whole, without necessarily even altering the montage, by adding a sound track that made a powerful denunciation of the horrors of imperialist war and of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan that, they point out, continue in the United States to this very day.[23] *Détournement* could also be used, they go on to say, for the filmic rewriting of history and in order to illustrate theoretical claims.[24] In an early text there is also an amusing suggestion as to how one can recuperate hopelessly commercial films through the use of *détournement* as a mode of spectatorship. At one point during the itinerary of a *dérive*, one should stop into a movie theater for slightly less than an hour and interpret the currently playing adventure film as follows:

> . . . let the heros be some more or less historical people who are close to us, connect the events of the inept scenario to the real reasons which we understand are behind the actions, and connect them also to the events of the current week. Here you have an acceptable collective distraction . . .[25]

Besides *détournement*, however, there are a number of other arguments for the importance of the cinema within the corpus of SI writings. Viénet insists that the SI must require each of its members to be just as capable of making a film as writing an article because film is just as powerful and accessible a polemical medium as articles, books, leaflets, or posters. Moreover, he argues, such cinematic experience would in turn "intensify" the written articulation of the same problems.[26] In an untranslated text entitled "For the Debate on Orientation, Spring 1970: A Note on the First Series of Texts," Debord makes a similar argument, convinced that the production of films is important not only for rhetorical but also for financial reasons.[27] Under the heading "Le cinéma," the last of a series of "Modest Propositions," he writes:

> Each film could give one or two Situationists working as assistants the opportunity to master their own style in this language; and the inevitable success of our works would also provide the economic base for the future production of these comrades. *The expansion of our audience is of decisive importance.*[28]

For these and other reasons Debord claims that of the many young filmmakers in various countries attempting to use film as instruments of revolutionary critique, at present

> only the positions and methods of the Situationists (as formulated in the theses by René Viénet in our previous issue) have direct access to a contemporary revolutionary usage of the cinema—although political and economic conditions can of course still pose problems.[29]

This claim is fleshed out in a series of LI and SI film reviews of movies by Julien Duvivier, the "cinematographic ruin"[30] (an indignant critique of *Marianne de ma jeunesse*), Federico Fellini (a pan of *La Strada*), Agnès Varda (*La pointe courte* faulted for its vacuous politics), Alain Resnais (praised for *Hiroshima mon amour* then lambasted for *L'année dernière à Marienbad*), Norman McLaren (*Blinkity Blank* accused of plagiarizing the Lettrist cinema), and Jean-Luc Godard, "the dumbest of the pro-Chinese Swiss" (attacked in a number of articles for his cinematic politics, especially in *A bout de souffle* and *Le gai savoir*).[31] The greatest insight into the "contemporary revolutionary usage of the cinema" by the SI, however, is to be had from the films they themselves—that is, first and foremost Guy Debord—made.

II

Je veux un ciné qua non![32]

Yes. Guy Debord, theorist and critic of the spectacle par excellence, was—as he himself often pointed out—a filmmaker.[33] It is a most curious and rather ignored fact that besides writing, organizing, and editing the *IS*, adjudicating schisms, and denouncing traitors and fools, Debord also directed no less than six 35mm black and white sound films over a period of twenty-six years from 1952 to 1978 and had plans for numerous others as well.[34] If this seems surprising, it is no accident: these films were attended by only a very few in Paris, have rarely been seen outside France, have never been screened in the US, and have provoked almost no critical literature whatsoever beside a number of more or less incidental newspaper reviews.[35]

To some extent this is due to the fact that the films are hard to watch (for reasons that will become clearer below). But until recently, at least, the films *could* be seen. Indeed, Debord's patron and friend Gérard Lebovici—a French film producer whom he had met in 1971—not only supported Debord's work by financing what was effectively a Situationist press, Editions Champ Libre (now called Editions Gérard Lebovici), he also bought a cinema—the Studio Cujas in Saint-Germain-des-Prés—that projected Debord's complete cinematographic production on a continuous and exclusive basis. This lasted only through 1984, however, when following the mysterious and still unsolved murder of Lebovici in a parking garage off the Champs Elysées, Debord suddenly withdrew his films in a gesture of protest and mourning classically Situationist in its decisiveness. Incensed by the murder of his friend and by the manner in which the press reported it, he then wrote *Considérations sur l'assassinat de Gérard Lebovici* (Reflections on the assassination of Gérard Lebovici) in which he announced that

> the outrageous manner in which the newspapers have discussed his assassination has led me to decide that none of my films will ever be shown again in France. This absence will be the most fitting homage.[36]

Today all efforts to view the films in Paris prove futile: the distributor acknowledges that he has the prints but requires Debord's permission to screen them and this permission, for reasons that must be respected, is not to be had.[37]

While Debord's films are thus now strictly speaking invisible, they fortunately are not entirely unavailable since Debord published detailed scenarios of his film works in both journals and books on a number of occasions. The first three scenarios appeared in a volume entitled (indicatively) *Contre le cinéma* (Against the cinema) (fig. 6.4) published by the Scandinavian Institute for Comparative Vandalism in 1964,[38] and in 1978 the scenarios of all six of Debord's films were made available in the collection *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978* (Complete cinematographic works).[39] With only one exception, which will be articulated below, the study of Debord's anti-spectacular cinema is forced to take recourse to the only available traces, the appropriately nonspectacular *textual* scenarios.

In the opening moments of Debord's first film, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (Howls in favor of Sade; 1952) Debord himself provides the audience with the cinematic tradition in which to situate his work:

> Memory aid for a history of cinema: 1902—Voyage dans la lune. 1920—The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. 1924—Entr'acte. 1926—Battleship Potemkin. 1928—Un chien andalou. 1931—City Lights. Birth

6.4
Cover illustration from Guy Debord, *Contre le cinéma* (1964)

> of Guy-Ernest Debord. 1951—Traité de bave et d'éternité. 1952—L'Anticoncept—Hurlements en faveur de Sade.[40]

This whirlwind tour of landmarks in film history—genre classics of the early cinema (Georges Méliès), expressionist cinema (Robert Wiene), dada cinema (René Clair), Russian revolutionary cinema (Sergei Eisenstein), surrealist cinema (Louis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí), and socially engaged comedy (Charlie Chaplin)—also sketches the contours of a film aesthetic if one considers each entry as shorthand for a catalogue of formal devices and concerns. This is particularly true of the last two works listed prior to Debord's *Hurlements*, the extraordinary and largely unfamiliar films of Isidore Isou and Gil J Wolman who, along with Maurice Lemaître, are the principal figures of what is known as Lettrist cinema, the cinematic avant-garde that was probably the single greatest influence on Debord's cinematic practice.

In the largely neglected history of postwar French experimental cinema it was the Lettrist movement whose remarkable films, or "movie performances," in the 1950s took up a wide range of radical practices (first explored decades earlier by the dadaists) that later became the basic vocabulary of the American and continental "underground" cinema.[41] These practices include, to take just a few examples, the use of flicker, radical sound-image discontinuity, negative sequences, multiple simultaneous acoustic inputs, direct manipulation of the celluloid surface through tearing, writing, and scratching, and an active engagement of the spectator à la "expanded cinema." According to Dominique Noguez, the historian of the French experimental cinema and virtually the only scholar of avant-garde film to recognize the significance of the Lettrist cinema,

> it was really the Lettrist movement (Isidore Isou, Maurice Lemaître) which laid the foundations in the early fifties for an avant-garde revival. At the same time as, or even before, the American avant-garde, the Lettrists invented a great many of the working methods, the forms and the structures widely used today throughout the international experimental cinema.[42]

Indeed, as will become clearer below, the Lettrist cinema not only provided a formative context for the films by Debord but also anticipated and to some extent may have provoked aspects of the work of filmmakers such as Peter Kubelka, Tony Conrad, Malcolm LeGrice, and Norman McLaren, to name just a few.

The theoretical basis of Lettrist film finds its most eloquent—and extensive—expression in the *Esthétique du cinéma* by Jean-Isidore Isou, a Rumanian Jew who was the founder of the Lettrist movement.[43] It is in this impressively elaborated philosophical architectonic that Isou makes a distinction (fundamental to the Lettrist aesthetic) between two successive tendencies in the development of any artistic medium: the *phase amplique* (amplic phase) and the *phase ciselante* (chiseling phase). The former refers to the period during which an art form is elaborated, develops its stylistic vocabularies, and employs them to explore and give expression to subjects other than itself. In cinema this would correspond to the development of narrative techniques (flashback, subjective camera), the evolution of various genres, the exploration of the camera's documentary capacities, and so on. The second, "chiseling" phase occurs when the first has run its course and the medium finds itself at a point of exhaustion or of bloated, decadent excess (fig. 6.5). This leads to a renunciation of subjects external to the medium itself, a reflexive involution during which basic formal and technical presuppositions are subjected to a radical interrogation.[44]

6.5
"Photograph—on intentionally damaged footage—published in 1952 in the journal *Ion*," of Guy Debord (*Contre*, p. 11)‡

The polemical claim of the Lettrist film aesthetic is that the cinematic medium has exhausted its amplic resources and must now move into the subsequent chiseling phase. This is proclaimed in one of the first of numerous manifestos for the new era of "discrepant" cinema, a manifesto that is itself, as it explicitly points out, a film: the first section of Isou's *Traité de bave et d'éternité* (Treatise of slobber and eternity; 1951).[45] Here the protagonist Daniel, expounding his new ideas on the "art of film" to the unruly members of a ciné-club audience, declares:

> I think first of all that the cinema is too rich. It is obese. It has reached its limits, its maximum. The moment it attempts to grow any further cinema will explode. Suffering from a case of congestion, this

‡ Captions appearing within quotation marks consist of Debord's own description of the image taken from his film scenarios. All citations are either from *Contre le cinéma* or *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978*. When the image and image description have been taken from different works, two citations are given: the first is to the source of the image description, while the second is to the source of the image.

> *pig stuffed with fat* will rip apart into a thousand pieces. I announce the *destruction of cinema*, the first apocalyptic sign of disjunction, of the rupture of this *bloated and pot-bellied* organism called film.[46]

Rather than attempting to create new masterpieces, Daniel insists, the future of the cinema lies in the chewing up, digesting, and regurgitating of the masterpieces of the past. In formal terms, this imperative—which could be read as a call for cinematic *détournement*—manifests itself in two practices that have become the hallmark of Lettrist cinema, the radical suspension of sound-image coordination and the intentional mutilation of images:

> The rupture between words and the photograph will constitute what I call THE DISCREPANT CINEMA. *I proclaim the manifesto of discrepant cinema!* I call for filmstrips that have been lacerated or willfully worked over by the filmmaker, *chiseled filmstrips*.[47]

Indeed, referring to what he calls the "sadism of the photo," Daniel explains that the more the filmstrip is decomposed, gangrened, and infected, the more beautiful it will seem to the filmmaker.

Isou's *Esthétique du cinéma* was first published in April 1952 as the lead article in the first (and only) issue of the journal *Ion*, a "special issue on cinema" that also includes virtually all of the major figures and works of Lettrist cinema.[48] Besides Isou's text—which is cited in the introductory remarks as the shared basis of the entire issue[49]—the table of contents includes an important piece by Serge Berna entitled "Jusqu'à l'os" (To the bone), texts by Poucette, Yolande de Luart, and Monique Geoffroy, Marc, O's "Première manifestation d'un cinéma nucléaire," as well as the scenarios of Gil J Wolman's *L'Anticoncept*, François Dufrêne's *Tambours du jugement premier*, of Gabriel Pomerand's *La légende cruelle*, and of Guy Debord's first film, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*. It was this very same group that, almost simultaneously with the publication of *Ion*, undertook a "systematic sabotage" of the 1952 Cannes Film Festival that ultimately led to their arrest.[50] As part of their actions these "men of a new cinema" signed and distributed a polemical tract entitled "Fini le cinéma français" (French cinema is over) that condemned current commercial film production and announced the advent of the new "insurrectional" phase of Lettrist cinema:

> A number of men [*sic*], dissatisfied with what they have been given, surpass the world of official expressions and the festival of its poverty.
> After **L'ESTHETIQUE DU CINEMA** by Isidore **ISOU**, **TAMBOURS DU JUGEMENT PREMIER**, the essay in imaginary cinema by François **DUFRENE**, systematizes to the utmost extreme the exhaustion of filmic means, by locating it beyond all of its technology.
> Guy-Ernest **DEBORD** with
> **HURLEMENTS EN FAVEUR DE SADE** arrives at the end of cinema in its insurrectional phase.
> After these refusals, definitively outside the norms which you like, the
> **CINEMA NUCLEAIRE** by **MARC,O.** integrates the exhibition space and the spectator into the cinematographic representation.
> From now on, cinema can no longer be anything but **NUCLEAR**.
> Thus we want to go beyond these derisory competitions of sub-products between little businessmen who are either already illiterate or destined to soon become so. Our mere presence here makes them die.
> And here are the men [*sic*] of a new cinema: Serge **BERNA**, **G.E. DEBORD**, François **DUFRENE**, Monique **GEOFFROY**, Jean Isidore **ISOU**, Yolande du **LUART**, **MARC,O.**, Gabriel **POMERAND**, **POUCETTE**, Gil J. **WOLMAN**.[51]

The scenario of *Hurlements* published in *Ion*, a first version later abandoned, is a veritable catalogue of Lettrist cinematic strategies and citations. These include acoustic material by (and/or references to) Dufrêne, Marc, O, and Isou, as well as improvisations of Lettrist poetry, citations of Apollinaire, shouts, noises, and music by Vivaldi. The image track, which includes newsreel footage (a boxing match, young people killed in the streets of Athens, the Indian army), images of Paris, of Debord, and of Marc, O, also contains much graphical work on language, black frames, and film scratched to the point of total destruction. At times, however, it is, as is spelled out on the screen, "T,e,l,l,e,m,e,n,t, v,i,d,e, à, h,u, r,l,e,r, à, h,u,r,l,e,r"

(So empty one could scream, one could scream). The function of these and other devices are elucidated by Debord in an epigrammatic preface to the scenario entitled "Prolegomenes à tout cinéma futur" (Prolegomena to all future cinema).[52] In this programmatic one-page text (whose first and last lines reappear in the scenario) Debord guides the reader through the various Lettrist techniques that will be employed in his film. These techniques, Debord states in a slightly ironic appropriation of Isouian rhetoric, will assure that his film "will remain among the most important in the history of the reductive hypostasis of cinema by means of a terrorist disorganization of the discrepant."[53] According to Debord's poetics of Lettrist cinema, the chiseling or defacement of the image and the Lettrist sound performances "are here envisaged as the expression as such of revolt"; censored phrases "denounce repressive forces"; words spelled out "sketch an even more total dislocation," a "destruction" that continues in the aleatory relation of sound and image that reciprocally invade, duplicate, succeed, or ignore each other.

In the second and final version of *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* that premiered barely two months after the publication of *Ion*, there is hardly a trace of the Lettrist idiom so manifest in the scenario described above.[54] Stripped of all its "chiseled" aspects in both the visual and acoustic domains, the notorious *Hurlements* is a black and white sound film *without images*.[55] Its sound track, devoid of any music or noise, consists of dialogue spoken without expression by Wolman, Isou, Debord, Serge Berna, and Barbara Rosenthal. The image track is literally black and white: when one of the five voices is speaking, the screen is white; during the remainder of the film the sound track is silent, the screen is black, and the entire screening space is dark. The dialogue consists primarily of phrases that have been detourned from journals, works by James Joyce, the French *code civil*, Isou's *Esthétique du cinéma*, and from John Ford's *Rio Grande*, supplemented by quotidian banalities.[56] More remarkable still is the fact that the sound track runs during only a total of approximately twenty minutes in a film lasting one hour and twenty minutes. Needless to say, the audience has become bored and nervous, if not violent, long before the twenty-four minute black silence that makes up the final sequence—a sequence that Debord claims was the inspiration for Yves Klein's monochrome paintings.[57]

The history of the early screenings of *Hurlements* suggests to what extent the film successfully realized the concluding credo of the "Prolegomena" that is also heard on the film's sound track: "The arts of the future will be radical transformations of situations, or nothing at all."[58] At its Paris premier on 30 June at the Ciné-Club d'Avant-Garde in the Musée de l'Homme, *Hurlements* was almost immediately brought to a halt by Armand-Jean Cauliez, director of the film club, and yet still managed to provoke violence in the audience. The film was first screened in its entirety on 13 October 1952 at the Ciné-Club du Quartier Latin in the rooms of the Sociétés Savantes.[59] This time there was no disturbance thanks to the presence of a group of "Left Lettrists" who enforced the peace.[60] Screenings of *Hurlements* at the ICA (London) in May 1957 and then again in June 1960 also caused amusing scandals, the latter event described as follows by Guy Atkins in his study of Asger Jorn:

> During a final silence of twenty-four minutes, when the only sound in the room was the turning of the reel, a member of the audience got up, thanked Mrs [Dorothy] Morland [Director of the ICA] for an interesting evening and apologized for having to leave early. Everyone else stayed to the end, hoping that a sensational tidbit might still be coming. When the lights went up there was an immediate babble of protest. People stood around and some made angry speeches. One man threatened to resign from the ICA unless the money for his ticket was refunded. Another complained that he and his wife had come all the way from Wimbledon and had paid for a babysitter, because neither of them wanted to miss the film. . . .
>
> The noise from the lecture room was so loud that it reached the next audience, queueing on the stairs for the second house. Those who had just seen the film came out of the auditorium and tried to persuade their friends on the stairs to go home, instead of wasting their time and money. But the atmosphere was so charged with excitement that this well-intentioned advice had the opposite effect. The

> newcomers became all the more anxious to see the film, since nobody imagined that the show would be a complete blank![61]

Atkins's account demonstrates rather clearly the extent to which Debord's "blank," this "nothing" of a film, was the very means by which the "radical transformation of [a] situation" was realized, the transformation of an event that would otherwise have been a mere iteration of the avant-garde cinematic spectacle-ritual.

Despite its renunciation of an overtly Lettrist vocabulary, *Hurlements* remains a decidedly Lettrist work. In fact, in abandoning the image track entirely, Debord pushes the gesture of chiseling—the damaging treatment of the filmstrip—to the limit: namely, the total destruction of the image. As Debord observes in a passage from an important article in *Potlatch*:

> Last June, we obtained the scandal which we expected upon presenting in London a film which I had made in 1952, a film which is not a mystification and even less a Situationist work. Rather this film is based on a number of complex Lettrist motivations from that period (the work on the cinema by Isou, Marco [*sic*], Wolman) and thus participates fully in the phase of decomposition, indeed, to be precise, in its most extreme form, yet, with the exception of a few programmatic allusions, devoid of the desire to make positive developments which is characteristic of the works to which I just alluded.[62]

Indeed, as Debord acknowledges, the reductive gesture of *Hurlements* is a radicalization of a negative moment that had already been articulated at various points in the pages of *Ion*. In Serge Berna's essay, "Jusqu'à l'os," for example, which calls for a transformation of cinema that goes beyond the mere flesh of the medium and attacks it at the skeletal level, the opening lines read:

> Today, faced with the imperatives imposed upon us by the cinematographic tradition, we must smash the double magic circle which protects this citadel. The first is the sacred barrier within which one guards the credo: "Cinema-is-images."[63]

This is precisely the project, for example, of François Dufrêne's *Tambours du jugement premier* (1952), a "film" (consisting of only a sound track) that "puts in doubt the very essence of cinema by means of the IMAGINARY CINEMA."[64]

Berna's imperative also characterizes the films of Wolman and Isou. In Wolman's *L'Anticoncept* (1951)[65] the image track consists of nothing but a white circular field that flashes on and off randomly, sometimes at almost psychedelic speed.[66] The result is a dramatic foregrounding of the sound track, a combination of polemical pronouncement, Lettrist sound poetry, and improvised narrative. Following a section toward the end of the hour-long work that plays with the possibilities offered by varying the speeds of the sound recording—an exploration of the creative capacities offered by a manipulation of the apparatus of mechanical reproduction that anticipates by nearly thirty years the "scratch aesthetic" of black street music in the late 1970s—there is a break marked by the line "la vie n'est pas retrospective" (life is not retrospective). Subsequently, the sound track degenerates into a hilarious cacophony of regurgitory and defecatory acoustics.

In Isou's film *Traité*, the assault on the image track takes place not so much on a formal level as in terms of its "*readying of rupture.*"[67] While the print of *Traité* shown on 20 April 1951 at a special screening for journalists at Cannes was without images, according to numerous accounts this absence was due to the simple fact that only the sound track had been completed at the time.[68] By the time of its Paris debut, the film included an image track in high Lettrist style: chiseled and random images, shots of Indochina, the Seine, skiers, portraits of Lettrists, and so on.[69] The issue of the priority of the visual is nevertheless raised in the voice-over. One must, as Daniel puts it:

> Destroy the photograph for the sake of speech, do the inverse of what one has done in this domain, the contrary of what one *thought was the cinema*. Who ever said that the cinema, whose meaning is *movement*, must absolutely be *the movement of the photograph* and not the *movement of the word*? . . . The photograph bothers me in the cinema.[70]

It is crucial to note, however, that the devaluation of the image is here motivated by a passion for the sound or, elsewhere, for the letter as such.[71] This classically

Lettrist concern is, however, at root *aesthetic* and as such far from the imperatives governing the only *apparently* similar gesture by Debord.

The very different impetus behind the elimination of the image track in Debord's film is best understood in light of a hypothetical narrative in Isou's *Esthétique du cinéma* that recounts, curiously enough, what could be considered as the very first conception of *Hurlements*:

> At the Cannes Festival everyone was speaking about *Traité de bave et d'éternité* which had only been presented at the last moment. The day of the projection it was confirmed that the film did not even exist. A journalist from *Combat* named Arlaud had cried out in the theater: "It would be great if there is no film; we could write our headlines right away." Fortunately (or *unfortunately*) in the end the film did turn up.
>
> Had there been no film, Marc-Gilbert Guillaumin [Marc, O] and Guy-Ernest Debord would have concretely and willingly realized this *lack*. They had planned to speak to a director of a ciné-club that had shown a number of works of our group and to announce an even more sensational creation. The title was already set: *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*. They would have sent out invitations, made posters and called the journalists. They would have then brought the reels from another film in order to reassure the director who, by the way, had taken us at our word. [Footnote #1: And our word would have been kept since, in any case, we would have *offered him a spectacle*]. At the point when the projection was to have begun, Debord would have gotten up on stage in order to say a few words of introduction. He would have simply said: "There is no film." I thought I would get involved and link up their destructive scandal with the theory of the constructive *pure debate*. Debord should have said: "The cinema is dead. There can be no more film. [Footnote #2: The scandal would thereby have acquired a new meaning within a holistic conception]. Let us proceed, if you like, to the debates." [Footnote #3: Since, in any case, the debate would have been presented as an oeuvre, the journalists would have had to chronicle the *premiere* of a new form of work].[72]

The importance of this passage—whose last few lines are cited (albeit in slightly altered form) in the opening moments of *Hurlements*[73]—must be stressed. Unlike both Wolman and Isou, Debord does not critique the image simply in order to invest the spoken or written "letter" with a new poetic vitality. Rather, the absence of the film—and similarly the lack of images in *Hurlements*—is employed as the essential ingredient in a recipe of provocation intended to "radically transform" the cinematic "situation" from a shrine of passive consumption into an arena of active discussion, a shift *away* from the spectacular and *toward* critical engagement. As will become increasingly evident in Debord's later films, already here the focus has begun to shift toward the problem of cinematic *reception*, that is, the issue of spectatorship. In the "Prolegomena," following the enumeration and theoretical articulations of various Lettrist tactics, the concluding remarks read: "But all this belongs to an epoch that is ending, and that no longer interests me. Creative values are shifting toward a conditioning of the spectator . . ."[74]

Debord describes *Hurlements* as a "negation and a move beyond the Isou-ian conception of 'discrepant cinema.'"[75] Despite its indebtedness to the Lettrist cinema, the negativity of Debord's film is in fact much closer in its gesture to what one could call "dada cinema."[76] The term is here employed not as a historical designation (according to which a film is "dada" because it was made by a dadaist) but rather as a description of a type of "anti-object" that frustrates contemplative immersion on the part of the spectator and incites public indignation. The distinction is all the more urgent in light of the fact that most historically dada films were not successful as "dada" events. Even *Entr'acte*, that most paradigmatic of historic dada films, was unable to produce the disruptive effects that had been anticipated despite the film's formal radicality.[77] The spectacular structure of the cinematic event itself, so it seems, is at odds with the disconcerting thrust of the dada gesture. Indeed if, as Thomas Elsaesser points out, "film [was] a less than perfect medium at Dada events," this is a function of the very apparatus itself:

> For the conditions of a reception in the cinema—the dark room, the stable rectangle of the screen, the fixed voyeuristic position of the spectator—all

> counteract not only the sense of provocation, but they also compensate for the absence of a coherent diegesis and for the non-narrative organization in the filmed material.[78]

The condition of possibility of "dada" *as* cinema then, requires that the "fundamental degradation of their material," which Walter Benjamin describes as a hallmark dada practice,[79] be carried even further than the suspension of narrative coherence. It is precisely this extreme that is realized in the elimination of the image track in *Hurlements*. Here Debord suspends even the residual referentiality of the white disc in *L'Anticoncept* (which can still be seen as lens, keyhole, eye) and also attenuates the continuous visual absence of *Tambours* by alternating the black imageless void with a blank white field that, although present, is not readable as anything but the apparatus itself—the screen, the projection, the lamp, and so on. Here that which is always—necessarily—present in the mode of absence, "covered" by the representation that it serves to convey, is staged as such. The spectators, confronted with their *desires and expectations* for a (the) spectacle, are provoked to the point of screams (*hurlements*) when it is revealed to what extent they themselves are an integral part of this spectacular economy.[80] It is in this light that *Hurlements* can be called a—indeed perhaps the first—truly dada film.[81] As Debord states with his own voice at a privileged point in his next film where for the first time the screen becomes entirely white: "One never really contests an organization of existence without contesting all of that organization's forms of language."[82]

III

One must insert new forces into the battle of leisure, and we will hold our position there.[83]

The year 1952, during which *Hurlements* was completed and premiered, was also the year in which a number of the more radical Lettrists split off and formed the Lettrist International (LI), a scission that could be read as the political analogon to the aesthetic distanciation from certain aspects of the Lettrist project manifested in *Hurlements*. Curiously, this key development in the genealogy of the SI—whose initial stages were virtually simultaneous with the first screening of Debord's film—subsequently came to a head in the polemics around another cinematic event: the controversial intervention at Charlie Chaplin's press conference held on 29 October 1952 at the Ritz Hotel in Paris on the occasion of the release of *Limelight*. Here, Debord, Wolman, Serge Berna, and Jean-L. Brau broke through police barriers and bombarded Chaplin with an insulting, denunciatory tract entitled "Finis les pieds plats" (No more flat feet)[84] in which they insisted that the very act of holding a press conference indicated Chaplin's sullied commercial values. The tract further lambasted Chaplin's "turn-the-other-cheek" attitude toward oppression, arguing instead that one should respond to suffering with revolution. The attack did not meet with the approval of all the Lettrists, however. Despite an initial endorsement of the undertaking, Isou, along with Lemaître and Gabriel Pomerand, expressed reservations in a public disavowal of the gesture published in *Combat* on 1 November 1952.[85] This in turn prompted Debord, Wolman, Brau, and Serge Berna to disassociate themselves from what they perceived as the "reactionary" Lettrist faction.[86] Their declaration that "the most compelling exercise of freedom is the destruction of idols, especially when they speak in the name of freedom,"[87] reads both as a justification of their attack on Chaplin and of their break (through the formation of the LI) with Isou, Lemaître, and Pomerand as well.

Just as *Hurlements* was a response to the Lettrist movement from a position already beyond it, Debord's next film, which appeared seven years later, *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (On the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time; 1959), is largely a retrospective account of the activities of the Lettrist International.[88] As the voice-over "announcer" proclaims: "Our camera has captured for you a few aspects of a provisional micro-society,"[89] a group of young people who congregated in Saint-Germain-des-Prés ("the strange setting of our story") where they "carried out the systematic questioning of all the diversions and labors of a society as well as a global critique of its idea of happiness."[90] While *Sur le passage* is a sometimes slightly nostalgic depiction of the LI, it is at the same time an involuted theoretical meditation. Debord formulates this simultaneity as follows:

6.6
"Tracking shot of the starlette in her bathtub," Anna Karina in a detourned soap commercial in *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (OCC, p. 29/ *Contre*, p. 55)

> This short film can be taken as a series of notes on the origins of the Situationist movement; notes that, as a result, obviously contain a reflection on their own language.[91]

Indeed, the combination of personal reflection and theoretically articulated reflexivity is not only characteristic of *Sur le passage* but, as will become clearer below, is also one of the hallmarks of all of Debord's subsequent films.

Initially, the most striking feature of Debord's second film is the reintroduction of photographic representation. However, following the filmic tabula rasa produced by the elimination of the visual track in *Hurlements*, the images here have a very special status: they are, for the most part, visual citations. Like the sound track in *Hurlements* that, as described above, was composed of "invisible" citations of fragments from various sources, the visual track in *Sur le passage* is a veritable catalogue of *détournement*, employing found footage of policemen in Paris, England, and Japan, colonialists demonstrating in Algiers, parachutists, a speech by de Gaulle, and a solar eruption, to take just a few examples. The film, described in a methodological discussion of *détournement* as a "detourned documentary"[92] (fig. 6.6), also makes extensive use of a publicity film for Monsavon. In all these cases Debord is doing what Viénet called for years later:

> We should appropriate the first stammerings of this new [cinematic] language; and above all its most consummate and modern examples, those which have escaped artistic ideology even more than American B movies: newsreels, previews, and above all, filmed ads.
>
> Although it has obviously been in the service of the commodity and the spectacle, filmed advertising, in its extreme freedom of technical means, has laid the foundations for what Eisenstein had an inkling of when he talked of filming *The Critique of Political Economy* or *The German Ideology*.[93]

In fact, an initial version of *Sur le Passage* included many more *détournements* of scenes from other films, "limit cases of citation"[94] that ultimately had to be removed because—anticipating by almost 30 years the contemporary legal battles over "sampling"—the film com-

panies who owned the reworked scenes refused to sell the rights for reuse. Like *Mémoires* (1959) and its antecedent *Fin de Copenhague* (1957),[95] the collective collage projects by Debord and Asger Jorn that were composed entirely of prefabricated elements subjected to *détournement*, *Sur le passage* (produced the same year), is also a collage of *détournement*.

The citational quality of the image track in *Sur le passage* is manifest in the sound track as well, beginning with the opening credit sequence during which one hears a recording of the debates—primarily in French and German—of the third SI conference that was held in Munich in April 1959. Throughout the remainder of the film the voice-over consists largely of detourned phrases taken from various classical thinkers (fig. 6.7 and 6.8), from science fiction novels, or from current pop sociology and read in a generally indifferent manner by either Jean Harnois (using the tone of the radio announcer), Guy Debord (sad and muted in tone), or Claude Brabante (voice of a young girl). In general, the sound track in *Sur le passage*—which also includes music by Handel and Michel-Richard Delalande—has a status equal or superior to the image track, a reversal of the historical and formal priority of the image and a revalorization of the sound track that Debord brought about by suspending the visual dimension in *Hurlements*. This preeminence of the sound track is manifest graphically in the very layout of the scenario in which the film "texts" are presented in their entirety in large type, whereas only a very small selection of the images, described *underneath* in a smaller italic script, are reproduced at the end of the scenario.

In homage to the paradigmatic LI practice of the *dérive*, *Sur le passage* also includes another class of images: sympathetic depictions of favorite LI haunts such as the cafés in Saint-Germain-des-Prés (fig. 6.9), Les Halles by night and at dawn (fig. 6.10), the place Saint-Sulpice, the rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, and so forth. As the voice-over accompanying one such image explains, the members of the LI rejected the impoverished and myopic relation to the city manifested by most people:

> We wanted to break out of this conditioning, in search of an alternative use of the urban landscape, in search of new passions. The atmosphere of a few

6.7
"In the process of movement and therefore by their ephemeral side" (Karl Marx), *Sur le passage* . . . (OCC, p. 22)

6.8
"In the prestigious decor especially constructed for this purpose," *Sur le passage* . . . (OCC, p. 23)

6.9
"A photograph of two couples [Asger Jorn, Michèle Bernstein, Guy Debord, and an unidentified friend] drinking wine at a café table, is subjected to an examination by the camera in the style of an art film," *Sur le passage . . .* (OCC, p. 17)

6.10
"Numerous views of dawn at Les Halles," *Sur le passage . . .* (OCC, p. 20)

places gave us intimations of the future powers of an architecture that it would be necessary to create as the support and framework for less mediocre games. We could expect nothing of anything we had not altered ourselves.[96]

Debord's description of this quotidian adventure so central to the LI program also reads like a description of the film itself: "It was a trompe-l'oeil reality by means of which one had to discover the potential richness of reality."[97]

Sur le passage is, however, in no sense an unproblematic documentation of LI exploits. This has its material/political reasons. As one hears in the voice-over at a privileged moment in the film where—in a gesture reminiscent of *Hurlements*—the screen is suddenly entirely white:

> The ruling class monopoly of the instruments we should have had at our disposal in order to realize the collective art of our time had excluded us even from a cultural production officially dedicated to illustrating and repeating the past. An art film on this generation can only be a film on the absence of its works.[98]

As a result the Parisian scenes, sometimes interrupted by text frames,[99] are also subjected to a number of operations that problematize their documentary character. One of the various strategies employed to refashion traditional scenes is explained as follows:

> In order to adopt a position opposed to that of documentary film in terms of the construction of the spectacle, every time there was a danger of encountering a monument we avoided filming it by shooting instead the *point of view of the monument* (just as the young Abel Gance was able to position his camera to shoot from *the snowball's point of view*).[100]

Another important strategy of distanciation involves the depiction of the film crew, images of the clapper (fig. 6.11), the repeated refilming of a still photograph, and the staging of intentionally inept sequences in which the "apparatus" (camera, projection equipment, off-camera spectators) are visible. During one such sequence, Debord makes the following comment on the sound track:

6.11
"Two images of the film's clapboard being held at the start of two shots previously seen," *Sur le passage . . .* (OCC, p. 31)

> Of course, one could make it into a film. But even if such a film were to succeed in being as fundamentally incoherent and unsatisfying as the reality with which it is concerned, it will never be more than a re-creation—impoverished and false like this botched tracking shot.[101]

Here Debord articulates two of the leitmotifs of his cinematic production: (1) the calculated violation and/or analysis of cinematographic convention as a means of exposing the syntax—and in turn the ideological stakes—of the spectacle; and (2) the deliberate staging of confusion as both a refusal of a false and reductive pseudo-coherence of (narrative) spectacle and as a reflection of the fundamental *incoherence* of the reality of late capitalism.

In *Sur le passage*, the analysis/exposure of the economy of spectacle includes, beside the examples already cited above, an extensive—and very early—critique of auteurism, dismissed as hopelessly naive in light of the contemporary utter bankruptcy of individual expression.[102] There is also a lengthy dissection of the function and appeal of the "star." Accompanying the last of a number of shots of the "heroine" of a Monsavon soap commercial in a bathtub is the following voice-over text:

> In the final analysis, stars are created by the need we have for them and not by the talent or lack of talent or even by the film industry or by advertising. It is the misery of this need, the dismal and anonymous life which would love to swell to the dimensions of the life of the cinema. The imaginary life on the screen is the product of this real need. The star is the projection of this need.[103]

Like the desire for the star, the appetite for narrative continuity and general intelligibility is fueled by a (repressed) sense of the absence of just such continuity and intelligibility. Debord in turn justifies the refusal of just such transparency (for example, that the sound track be semantically redundant so as not to overwhelm the spectator) by arguing that incomprehensibility is a quotidian experience and its appearance in a film therefore justified. With the screen entirely white, the sound track of *Sur le passage* proclaims:

> Usually what allows one to understand documentaries is the arbitrary limitation of their subject matter. They describe the atomization of social functions and the isolation of their products. One can, in contrast, envisage the entire complexity of a moment which is not resolved into a work, a moment whose movement irreducibly contains facts and values and whose meaning is not yet apparent. The subject matter of the documentary would then be this confused totality.[104]

Throughout Debord's early films one finds variations of this polemic whose logic one could call the *mimesis of incoherence*: the film is unsatisfying because the world is unsatisfying; the incoherence of the film reflects that of the reality; the poverty of the film's materials serves to emphasize the poverty of its subject, and so on. The task of a radical documentary is thus to refuse the false reduction of a pseudo-coherence and to present as such an incoherence that, in its inpenetrable density, holds out the possibility of an alternative, not yet accessible meaning.[105] If one recalls the false coherence of the quotidian that psychogeographical explorations were meant to shatter, one can see how, in short, Debord's films are to the spectacle of traditional documentary or narrative cinema what the *dérive* is to daily life. They thus confirm Ivan Chtcheglov's prediction (under the pseudonym Gilles Ivain) that "later, once the gestures [of the continuous *dérive*] grow stale, this *dérive* will move partially from the realm of lived experience to the realm of representation.[106]

In Debord's next film, *Critique de la séparation* (Critique of Separation; 1961),[107] the only one of the six films that can still be seen today,[108] the nostalgic and retrospective tone of *Sur le passage* has been almost entirely displaced by critique and analysis. This is evident from the film's very first sequence, a series of random images punctuated by text frames that announce: "Coming soon on this screen—one of the greatest anti-films of all time!—Real people! A true story! On a subject that the cinema has never dared to broach." Simultaneously, on the sound track one hears the voice of Caroline Rittener reading the following citation from André Martinet's *Eléments de linguistique générale*:

> When one considers how natural and beneficial it is for man to identify his language with reality, one

> realizes the level of sophistication he had to reach in order to be able to dissociate them and make each an object of study.[109]

The unbroached subject of the film, it soon becomes clear, is its own operation, the "real people" its audience, and the "true" story that of the alienated relationship produced/staged by the spectacle.

Through a series of remarks spoken by Debord on the voice-over, the film articulates even the considerations that gave rise to the imperative of its own relentlessly involuted focus. It is a striking contradiction, the film insists, that our so-called rational culture develops greater and greater technological powers—among them cinema—whose utopian capacities remain unexplored, however, because those who stand to gain the most from such employment do not have access to them. Even worse, as most people are totally unaware of what is being denied them, they are blind to the need for any transformation. And yet, in a world marked by constant change, where modification is the rule not the exception, most people have been schooled in transformation on a quotidian basis. It would suffice, perhaps, to simply redirect the capacity for technological and other sorts of quotidian revolutions away from the commodity realm. Then, Debord states, "I am sure that those who produce [the world] day after day against their own interests could appropriate it for themselves."[110]

For Debord contestation of the totality—which is to say first and foremost of an entire mode of existence—is without doubt the only worthwhile adventure. However, such an undertaking must confront the fact that

> in the end, no adventure constitutes itself for us directly. As an adventure, it is linked to the whole range of legends transmitted by the cinema or by other means, which is to say the entire spectacular sham of history.[111]

The always already historically mediated status of all endeavors, no matter how critical their orientation—a crucial point—is simultaneously emphasized on the image track, where a photograph of two Situationists is intercut with a shot of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table taken from a Hollywood film (fig. 6.12) (a

6.12
"In a Hollywood photograph, a knight defies another knight," *Critique de la séparation* (OCC, p. 42)

6.13
"Eisenhower in the arms of Franco," *Critique de la séparation* (OCC, p. 45)

chivalric figure also employed elsewhere as emblematic for aspects of Situationist practice).[112] Work on the totality must thus always also be work on mediations and, in a world increasingly dominated by visual spectacle, this in turn means work on the spectacle.

A critique of the spectacle is all the more imperative since, as Debord reminds the viewer in a variation of Benjamin's oft-cited formulation, the spectacle is always the spectacle of the victor. Accompanying images of the UN Security Council, Krushchev, and de Gaulle, as well as Eisenhower receiving de Gaulle, talking with the Pope, and embracing Franco (fig. 6.13), the sound track provides the following commentary:

> The image that society projects for itself of its own history is limited to the superficial and static history of its rulers, that is, those that incarnate the external fatality of what takes place. The domain of the rulers is the very domain of the spectacle. The cinema suits them well. Moreover, the cinema is constantly presenting exemplary actions and constructing heros based on the same old model as these rulers along with everything that this implies.[113]

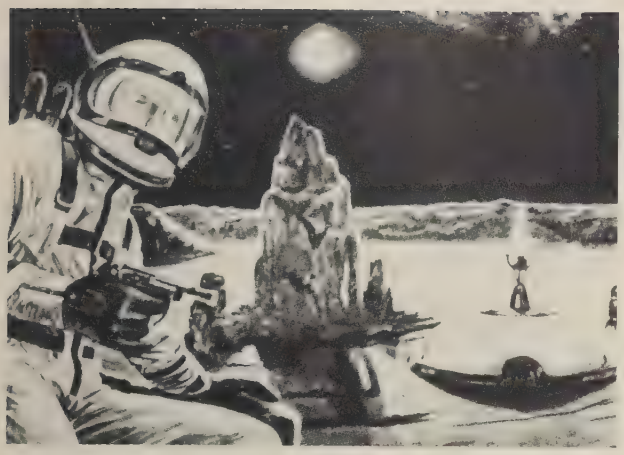
This has numerous ramifications: on the one hand, it is important to gain access to the means of spectacle production in order to begin producing "other" types of images that explore the heretofore largely unexamined utopian capacities of this technology; on the other hand, a media literacy must be developed that will expose the politics of hegemonic spectacle and thereby also simultaneously prepare a sensibility for an alternative employment of the medium in the future. In almost didactic fashion Debord's voice explains on the sound track:

> The cinematic spectacle has its rules, which enable one to produce satisfactory products. But dissatisfaction is the reality that must be taken as a point of departure. The function of the cinema is to present a false, isolated coherence, either dramatic or documentary, as a substitute for an absent communication and activity. To demystify documentary cinema it is necessary to dissolve what is called its subject matter.[114]

One of the best vehicles for just such a dismantling of the spectacular structure of documentary cinema, it turns out, is the cinema itself.

Having set itself the task of a polemical interrogation of the politics of cinematic representation, Debord's "anti-film" deploys a full arsenal of *détournement* in its frontal attack on the conflation of the iconico-indexical signifiers of the cinema with reality. Through a relentless superimposition of detourned images (fig. 6.14) (comic strips [fig. 6.15], press photos, documentary footage, scenes from other films [fig. 6.16]), language (both on the sound track, in text frames, and in subtitles) and music (pieces by François Couperin and Bodin de Boismortier), Debord constructs a work that continuously violates the semiotic redundancy of sound and image characteristic of commercial cinema. Instead of being governed by such reassuring "overcoding," Debord's third film is structured in a radically heterogeneous, contrapuntal manner: written texts interrupt or are superimposed on images, subtitles are often accompanied by other texts read on the voice-over, and so on.[115] According to Debord: "The relation between the images, the commentary and the subtitles is neither complementary nor indifferent. It itself aims to be critical."[116]

The sound-image relations in *Critique de la séparation*, its paratactic formal structure, and its refusal of the economy of "suture" (the catalogue of techniques employed to efface the marks of its own operation and to provide a coherent spectatorial position for the viewer to occupy) are justified first of all by the argument for the mimesis of incoherence already manifest in Debord's previous film. Debord's cinema is not a broken mirror fragmenting a homogeneous reality but an unbroken mirror reflecting a fragmented "reality" (only an unsatisfactory film can correspond to an unsatisfactory reality). At one point in the film just before the screen goes black and the sound track becomes silent, we are reminded that it is also "a documentation of the conditions of noncommunication."[117] The formal specificity of *Critique de la séparation* is also justified, however, in terms of the rhetoric of its address. A construction—or rather de-struction—that makes no claim to totalization thereby denies the viewer the quietistic, substitute satisfaction offered by the pseudo-intelligibility of most forms of cinema. Be-



6.14
"Image from the cover of a book of science fiction," *Critique de la séparation* (OCC, p. 41/ *Contre*, p. 85)

6.15
"Comic-strip image of a blonde with an exhausted expression on her face. The caption reads: 'But she failed. The jeep had sunk too deeply into the mud of the swamp,'" *Critique de la séparation* (OCC, p. 39)

6.16
"Photograph taken from a film; a radio-operator from the US navy; standing behind him, an officer and the heroine," *Critique de la séparation* (OCC, p. 40/*Contre*, p. 40)

cause Debord links the very form of narrative and (usually narratively constructed) documentary films with a specific mode of alienated spectatorship, these reigning strategies of cinematic intelligibility must be rejected. Formal coherence, in its own self-sufficiency, maintains the spectator in the comfortable position of consumer: "All coherent artistic expression already expresses the coherence of the past, already expresses passivity."[118] Incoherence, in turn, expresses if not active engagement, then at least a resistance to this passivity.

Critique de la séparation is thus, as its title indicates, a critique of one historically specific relation between viewer and viewed. As is explained in the voice-over accompanying an image of a riot by "natives" in the Belgian Congo (now Zaire), it does not suffice for a film to present an image of some unknown men trying to live differently (politics of the signified). Although such a depiction does have something of a radical, consciousness-raising effect, this is muted and ultimately compromised by its status *as a spectacle*, which is to say, by our nonintervention as spectators (politics of the signifier). As Debord notes in an important essay written at the time this film was being made:

> A revolutionary alteration of the present forms of culture can be nothing other than the supersession of all aspects of the aesthetic and technological apparatus, an apparatus that constitutes an aggregation of spectacles separated from life. It is not in its surface meanings that we should look for a spectacle's relation to the problems of the society, but at the deepest level, at the level of *its function as spectacle*.[119]

Debord's recognition that the question of politics in the cinema cannot be limited to a question of "content" but is always already also located in the very structure and operation of the representation leads him to link—in a manner reminiscent of the contemporaneous theoretical work of the *Tel Quel* group—ideological critique with modernist formal radicality.

Not unlike Barthes's distinction between "readerly" and "writerly" texts, Debord distinguishes between a form that fosters facile consumption and one that enlists, provokes, and engages the spectator in an active response. Consider the following remarks that constitute the final sequence of the film's sound track:

> This is a film that interrupts itself and does not come to an end. All conclusions remain to be drawn, everything has to be recalculated. The problem continues to be posed, its expression is becoming more complicated. We have to resort to other measures. Just as there was no profound reason to begin this abstract message, so there is none for concluding it. I have scarcely begun to make you understand that I don't intend to play the game.[120]

The emphasis on the disjunctive, incomplete form that calls upon the reader/spectator to articulate conclusions, the acknowledgment of the need for new means of expression, and the explicit refusal to privilege beginning and end (the distinguishing feature of a paratactic construction) is central to Debord's film practice. However, Debord does not depend upon a political formalism that mistakenly presupposes a necessary relationship between a radical aesthetic form and a nonalienated, nonseparated mode of spectatorship. The film makes no positive claims for any sort of nonspectacular, alternative mode as such. Instead, as summarized by the film's concluding self-description as a refusal to "play the game," Debord's position, while didactic, is rigorously negative.

In its denunciation of the operations of the reigning economy of spectacle, *Critique de la séparation* sketches the contours of an alternative only negatively, by means of its relentless violation, refusal, and critique of the contemporary politics of representation. Indeed, as Debord explains in a rather Brechtian formulation from a very early programmatic essay, such negativity is the condition of possibility of the construction of situations:

> The construction of situations begins on the ruins of the modern spectacle. It is easy to see to what extent the very principle of spectacle—nonintervention—is linked to the alienation of the old world. Conversely, the most pertinent revolutionary experiments in culture have sought to break the spectator's psychological identification with the hero so as to draw him into activity by provoking his capacities to revolutionize his own life. The situation is thus made to be lived by its constructors. The

> role played by a passive or merely bit-part playing "public" must constantly diminish, while that played by those who cannot be called actors but rather, in a new sense of the term, "livers," must steadily increase.[121]

It is a strategy captured visually in an image of another "game" that occurs on a number of occasions in the film: a sequence, filmed from above, of a pinball session. What is crucial in this representation of a mass cultural practice that in many ways could be read as a figure for late capitalism— for example, the reward of success in both cases is that one is allowed to continue to play— is that the sequence always ends with a "tilt," that is, the moment when the limit of legal "participation" is transgressed and the mechanism punishes the violation by ceasing to function. As a result of this infraction, however, certain aspects of the game—its limits, its principles of operation, the character of tolerated pseudo-engagement, and so forth—are revealed. Thus one can see how the tilt—together with its semantic associations of medieval contestations—captures a number of the essential features of what one might call Debord's aesthetic of counter-cinema. In *Critique de la séparation* and increasingly in the subsequent films, Debord "tilts" the spectacle and thereby violently brings to a halt a game marked by nonintervention or separation.

In the concluding sequence of *Critique de la séparation*, the new direction charted by the didactic documentation and critique of the spectacle—the itinerary of the tilt—is effectively announced as the program for future cinematographic work. Superimposed onto alternating images of Debord and Asger Jorn one reads the following exchange in the subtitles:

> [Jorn:] One could make a number of documentaries like this, lasting three hours. A sort of "serial."
> [Debord:] The 'Mysteries of New York' of alienation.
> [Jorn:] Yes, that would be better; it would be more boring, more meaningful.
> [Debord (as the camera pulls away from him):] More convincing.[122]

However, the next installation of the "Mysteries of Alienation"—which, as the closing subtitle announced, was "to be continued"—did not appear until six years later and then not in the shape of a film. Following an extended period during which, perhaps also as a result of insights developed through his earlier cinematic practice, the question of the spectacle remained one of his primary concerns, Debord presented the continuation of his analysis of the spectacle in the not entirely uncinematic form of a paratactic series of numbered aphorisms published in 1967 under the title *La société du spectacle.*

IV

The point is not to undertake a critique of revolutionary art, but rather to undertake a revolutionary critique of all art.[123]

Shortly after the publication of Debord's theoretical tour de force, the following announcement appeared in the pages of the October 1967 issue of *IS* as the concluding paragraph of an unsigned article lambasting Godard:

> It is known that Eisenstein wanted to make a film of *Capital*. In light of his formal conceptions and political submissiveness, one might wonder if his film would have been faithful to Marx's text. But for our part, we are sure we can do better. For example, as soon as it becomes possible, Guy Debord will himself make a cinematic adaptation of *La société du spectacle* that will certainly not fall short of his book.[124]

The opportunity to realize this project did not present itself, however, for quite a number of years. In fact it was not until after May '68 and the final dissolution of the SI in 1972 that Debord could make what would be his first feature-length film, the long announced cinematic treatment of *La société du spectacle* (1973).[125]

Whatever the multiple motivations behind Debord's interruption in 1973 of what was effectively a twelve year hiatus from filmmaking, the cinematic translation of *La société du spectacle* underscores the fact that the dissolution of the SI as an organization was not necessarily synonymous with the abandonment of a (post-Situationist) revolutionary agenda. Indeed, in the 1972 volume that constitutes the last public expression of the SI, *La véritable scission dans l'Internationale*, Debord and Gianfranco Sanguinetti characterize the post-'68 period in the following, markedly optimistic manner:

6.17–6.23
Publicity brochure for Debord's film *La société du spectacle*

> The new epoch is profoundly revolutionary and *it knows that it is*. At every level of the global society *one no longer can, and one no longer wants to* continue to do things as they were done before.[126]

Similar considerations were behind the production of Debord's first post-SI film, as evidenced by the pages of a handsome jet-black glossy brochure that was distributed to the press in 1973 (fig. 6.17–6.23). "Coming soon to a cinema near you," the cover reads in large white letters that continue on the following pages, "*La société du spectacle*," (next page) "and soon thereafter, everywhere else," (next page) "its destruction."[127] Preceding the pages that announce the full credits of the new cinematic work—presented by Simar Films and "written and directed by Guy Debord based on his book published by Editions Champ Libre"—one encounters the following statement:

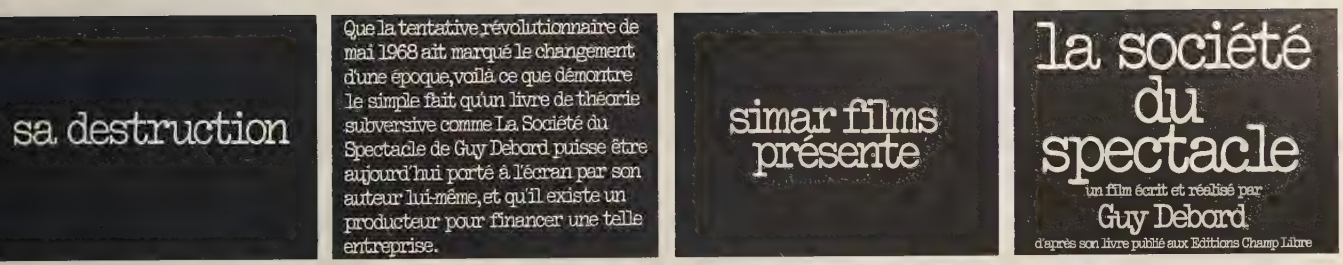
> The extent to which the revolutionary attempt of May 1968 marked the transformation of an epoch is demonstrated precisely by the simple fact that a book of subversive theory like *La Société du Spectacle* by Guy Debord could be brought to the screen by the author himself, and that there is a producer willing to finance such an undertaking.[128]

The producer in question, the man behind Simar Films, the production company that also went on to produce two more films by Debord, was Gérard Lebovici. Indeed, as Debord explicitly points out in the same brochure, his complete liberty in the working relation with Lebovici/Simar was a very unusual but absolutely essential precondition for his renewed engagement with the cinematic medium.[129]

La société du spectacle is not, however, as it is often described, simply the film version of the book (whatever that might mean, given the work in question). First of all, of the 221 theses in the printed version less than half—Debord insists the best ones[130]—are incorporated into the sound track; second, the order in which they are presented is not identical to the original sequence; and third, various additional texts not contained in the book have been introduced in text frames and subtitles. In short, the film offers, among other things, a re-reading (one is tempted to say re-editing) by Debord of his own work. This is especially true with regard to the inserted texts by Clausewitz, Emile Pouget, Machiavelli, Marx, Soloviev, Debord, and the Comité d'Occupation de la Sorbonne. These citations—differentiated by their visual presentation in text frames—serve not only as punctuation, marking the points where the original sequence of the theses has been interrupted, but also as elaborations, comments, and critique. One passage in particular, a quotation of August von Cieszkowski, can be read as an elucidation of the impetus behind Debord's cinematic rearticulation of his theoretical study:

> Thus, after the immediate production of art had ceased to be the most eminent activity and the predicate of eminence had shifted to theory as such, at present it has detached itself from the latter to the extent that there has developed a post-theoretical, synthetic practice whose primary purpose is to be the foundation and truth of both art and philosophy.[131]

According to the Hegelian logic of this assertion, it is the *theoretical art work*—which features both the particularity of the object and the generality of the philosophical—that is uniquely capable of fulfilling goals previ-


sa. destruction
Que la tentative révolutionnaire de mai 1968 ait marqué le changement d'une époque, voilà ce que démontre le simple fait qu'un livre de théorie subversive comme La Société du Spectacle de Guy Debord puisse être aujourd'hui porté à l'écran par son auteur lui-même, et qu'il existe un producteur pour financer une telle entreprise.
simar films présente
la société du spectacle
un film écrit et réalisé par
Guy Debord
d'après son livre publié aux Editions Champ Libre

ously assigned to art and/or philosophy. *La société du spectacle* thus represents Debord's attempt to produce just such a "post-theoretical, synthetic" work. As such it could be read as the culmination of the avant-garde artistic project begun in the early 1950s, temporarily suspended in favor of theoretical inquiry and political engagement in the years preceding May 1968, and now reactivated *as* theory. In this light, it is precisely the interrelation of the visual/artistic and the theoretical—an object lesson in spectacle analysis —that is of great significance.

As the theses from Debord's book are impassively read on the sound track, the image track presents an unending stream of detourned visual material. In fact, unlike the previous films that included some original film material shot by Debord, *La société du spectacle* employs *exclusively* found materials (figs. 6.24–6.36). These include—to cite only a selection from the first section of the film—street scenes, publicity stills (the majority focusing on the objectification of women), scenes from American Westerns and from Soviet and Polish films, fashion commercials, news footage of Nixon meeting Mao, the Sorbonne General Assembly in May '68, the earth filmed from space, astronauts, a police panoptical headquarters with TV monitors showing Metro stations and streets, the footage of the "live" murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, speeches by Giscard d'Estaing, Servan-Schreiber, Séguy, and Castro, bombing runs in Vietnam, and a depiction of a couple watching television. One also encounters sequences appropriated from numerous classics of film history, including *Battleship Potemkin, October, New Babylon, Shanghai Gesture, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Rio Grande, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Johnny Guitar,* and *Confidential Report.* As the intricate and multifarious imbrications of the theoretical and the visual cannot be examined in detail here, I will limit myself to a few general observations on Debord's cinematic translation of critical theory, a language of contradiction—dialectical both in content and form—that "is not the negation of style but rather the style of negation."[132]

Like the book *La société du spectacle*, Debord remarks that "its current cinematographic adaptation also does not offer a few partial political critiques but proposes instead a holistic critique of the extant world, which is to say, of all aspects of modern capitalism and its general system of illusions."[133] As the cinema is one of the tools of this "system of illusions," its language must be revolutionized for it to serve other ends. The coherence of the text-image relations is thus neither one of illustration nor of demonstration but rather of *détournement*—"the fluid language of anti-ideology"[134]—here defined as a mode of communication that contains its own critique. Employing a strategy reminiscent of Benjamin's *Passagenwerk* (Arcades Project) in its practice of citation without quotation marks, Debord insolently throws back at spectacular society the images with which it depicts itself.[135] Indeed, one could say that Debord's critique consists in an *incriminating, analytical quotation of the spectacle.* This marks a turning point in the history of cinema that, according to Debord's Hegelian logic, is nothing less than the *Aufhebung* (sublation) of the medium: "In a way, in this film, the cinema, at the end of its pseudo-autonomous history, gathers up its memories."[136] Debord's film is simultaneously a historical film, a Western, a love story, a war film—and none of the above; it is a "critique without concessions," a spectacle

6.24
"A long striptease," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 61)

6.25
"A couple, stretched out on a sofa, watches television," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 68)

6.26
Sterling Hayden and Joan Crawford in Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954), *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 74–75)

of spectacle that as such, like the double negative, reverses the (hegemonic) ideological marking of the medium.

As one might expect, *La société du spectacle* was hardly a box-office success. But then, the telos of this cinematic production had never been financial gain: even prior to its release the hostility towards its violation of the syntax and economy of pleasure characteristic of spectacle was anticipated in the official "preview" for the film at the Studio Gît-le-Coeur. This announcement of what one can only call a "coming un-attraction" consisted of the following message—a *détournement* of an infamous reaction to Schiller's *Die Räuber*—slowly spelled out on a black screen:

> When the idea occurred to me to create the world, I foresaw that there, one day, someone would make a film as revolting as *La Société du Spectacle*. Therefore, I thought it better not to create the world. (signed): God.[137]

Many of the industry critics that reviewed the film seemed to have been of similar opinion: Alain Remond of *Télérama*, for whom the theoretical voice-over was incompatible with the images, concluded that "Debord has almost completely failed"; for S. L. P. of *Téléciné* "the result was far from convincing," and Bernard Pauly of *Cinéma 74* wrote that the film, despite some interesting aspects, was "disappointing and annoying . . . a total failure." Curiously, enthusiastic responses to the film came not only from an informed Leftist cinephile camp—*Zoom* critic J. F., for example, places *La société du spectacle* in the avant-garde pantheon of *Un chien andalou* and *Entr'acte*—but also in intelligent reviews in more establishment (conservative) papers. In an extensive article in *Le Monde* entitled "The 'Theoretical' Western by Guy Debord," François Bott describes in careful detail how "the collision of the images against each other and against the text gives rise to the truth of the spectacle," and in *Le Nouvel observateur*, Claude Roy not only praises Debord as a remarkable writer but raves about a film that is described as "powerfully thought-out . . . a masterpiece of joyous irony and critical humor."[138]

The critical response to *La société du spectacle* is important not only because it was far more extensive than that accorded any of Debord's previous films, but also because of the hostility that Debord insists was much greater and much more univocal in the reaction to his films than it had ever been in response to his writings.[139] Given the radical thrust of *La société du spectacle*, the contempt for the book on the part of the society it criticized at its roots was inevitable and even welcome. Indeed, to a certain extent the resistance confirmed aspects of the book's diagnosis, as was pointed out in an often hilarious survey of misreadings of SI works entitled "How Situationist Books Are Not Understood," published in the last issue of *Internationale situationniste*.[140] Continuing the longstanding SI tradition of targeting and analyzing criticism, Debord also plundered the commentaries on *La société du spectacle* for symptomatic material. This was then presented in a montage sampling across the full ideological spectrum under the title "Some Judgments on the Book" on the last four pages of the publicity brochure for the film.[141]

6.27
"The Stalinist [Georges] Marché speaks . . .," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 76)

6.28
"The camera pulls back from a photograph of a nude girl, then pans across another," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 76)

6.29
"Mao with his closest lieutenant Lin Piao," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 93)

It is not surprising then, that the responses to the film *La société du spectacle* were also, in turn, subjected to a similar ideological dissection. What is remarkable, however, is that this treatment itself *took the form of a film.* Less than two years after the release of *La société du spectacle*, Debord completed his fifth cinematic work, a short film adorned with the impudent, polemical title *Réfutation de tous les jugements, tant élogieux qu'hostiles, qui ont été jusqu'ici portés sur le film "La Société du Spectacle"* (Refutation of all the judgments, both complimentary and hostile, which have been brought to bear up until now concerning the film "The Society of the Spectacle"; 1975) (fig. 6.37–6.39). [142] A landmark in the history of cinema, this film is (to my knowledge) the first to take as its explicit and exclusive focus the analysis of the *reception* of a prior film. In its elaboration of an aspect of the *institutional* critique of spectacle nowhere to be found in the various traditions of avant-garde film—onto-materialist, subjectivist, and so on—*Réfutation* performs a sociological analysis reminiscent in many ways of Brecht's symptomatic investigation of the juridical wrangling in conjunction with his project to film *The Threepenny Opera.*[143]

Through an examination of the few real arguments to be found in eight representative reviews of his most recent film, Debord is able to establish a catalogue of the blind spots in their rhetorical strategies and to demonstrate their integral function in the economy of spectacle. If the focus here seems to have shifted from the analysis of spectacle proper to an investigation of the economy of its reception—that is, film criticism or, more generally, art criticism—this is only because the two are, as Debord demonstrates, effectively synonymous. As Debord had already noted over ten years earlier in the context of a discussion of the limits and significance of film criticism within a revolutionary project:

> Art criticism is second-degree spectacle. The critic is someone who makes a spectacle out of his very condition as spectator—a specialized and therefore ideal spectator, expressing his ideas and feelings *about* a work in which he does not really participate. He re-presents, restages, his own nonintervention in the spectacle. The weakness of random and largely arbitrary fragmentary judgments concerning spectacles that do not really concern us is imposed upon all of us in many banal discussions in private life. But the art critic makes a show of this kind of weakness, presenting it as *exemplary.*[144]

According to this logic one can read *Réfutation* as a rearticulation at the institutional level of the earlier "critique of separation."

While the polemical thrust of *Réfutation* is directed at the practice of the "exemplary" spectators, they are not the film's intended audience. Those who will be capable of understanding the film, the voice-over explains, are those who understand

> . . . that when, according to a very old power strategy, the French people were given a new minister called "The Minister of the Quality of Life" it was quite simply, as Machiavelli put it, "in order to retain at least in name that which they had lost."[145]

6.30
"A few models and a few realizations of recent architecture for vacation spots, so-called 'marinas' at the seashore that can also be found, however, in the mountains," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 99)

6.31
"The cruiser 'Aurora' sails up the Neva at the end of the night," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 9)

6.32
"The tower of Babel," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 101)

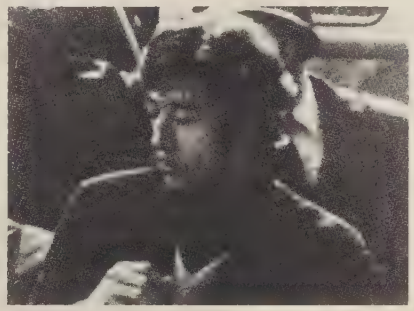
The lambasting of the critics, on the other hand, is sustained throughout the film, as indicated by the opening quotation of Chateaubriand: "There are times when one must be economical in one's expenditure of contempt, because of the large number of those in need of it."[146] Despite the variety of critical responses—analogous to the seeming variety of commodities in late capitalism—they all stem from the same culture industry. *Both* of the two general types of critical responses—naive falsification and incompetent approbation—are equally marked, Debord points out, by the position from which they speak. Whatever their position on the film, the critics remain "writing employees of the system of spectacular lying."[147]

The bulk of the comments dissected in *Réfutation* are ones that deal specifically with the cinematic spectacularization of *La société du spectacle*. The most popular objection, for example, is that the film is too difficult: according to one critic the theory on the sound track is too dense to follow, and according to another the images distract one from concentrating on the words. Such arguments not only imply that the critic was able to understand the text in book form (which Debord doubts), they also disguise as aesthetic objections to a certain conception of cinema what are at root political objections to a certain critique of society. To this Debord responds with a series of variations on the mimesis of incoherence argument discussed earlier: "The stupidity of their reactions goes hand in hand with the decadence of their world"; "The difficulty does not reside in my film, it is in their supine heads"; and "No film is more difficult than its epoch."[148] Dismissing the charge that his work marginalizes itself and thereby becomes a "ghetto cinema," Debord insists that he prefers "to remain in obscurity together with these masses rather than consenting to harangue them in the artificial illumination manipulated by those who hypnotize them."[149] As a final example, one must cite the almost clichéd move that points out the contradiction involved in a public denunciation and examination of the spectacle by means of the spectacle. Such a logically unimpeachable, ultra-purist stance—Debord calls it "Jesuitical"—is of course strategically naive in its insistence that nobody appear within the spectacle as its enemy. It fails to recognize, above all, that the spectacle can be made to serve various ends, including those of a critical theory that "understands, describes and works to overthrow a movement that is effectively taking place under our eyes."[150] Taken together, the films *La société du spectacle* and *Réfutation* are perhaps the most powerful realizations of a critical anti-cinematic film aesthetic already articulated over a decade before either of them were made. As formulated in the concluding lines of an important and largely ignored essay on the politics of communication, for the Situationists,

> any use of the legitimate modes of communication must thus both be and not be the refusal of this communication: a communication containing its own refusal; a refusal containing communication, which is to say the transformation of this refusal into a positive project. All this must lead somewhere. Communication will now contain *its own critique*.[151]

6.33
"The forces that maintain order in action . . . in the streets of Nantes [May 1968]," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 138)

6.34
"Christian Sebastiani," *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 135)



6.35
"Guy Debord," *La société du spectacle* (OCC p. 135)

V

Revolution is not "showing" life to people, rather it is making them live.[152]

In 1978—a decade after May '68—Editions Champ Libre published the collection of Debord's complete cinematographic works, *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes*. It contained the film scripts, shot descriptions, and illustrations as well as indications regarding text frames and sound material for all five of the films discussed above, as well as for a new, as yet unknown cinematic work by Debord: *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni* (We go around in circles in the night and are consumed by fire).[153] Produced the same year that the book was brought out, *In Girum*, Debord's second feature-length film, was not actually screened until three years later because no cinema was willing to take it. This created a predicament curiously similar to the current situation: from the outset *In Girum* was a film that existed first and, for a number of years, *exclusively* as a text. Furthermore, it was a film that only premiered years after Debord's relation to the cinema was—as indicated by the adjective *complete* in the title of the volume of his cinematographic works—already over. Thus *In Girum* was not only Debord's sixth film, it was also his last—a finality that is perceptible in the retrospective, historical, and subjective quality of the film. A coda not only to Debord's relation to the cinematic medium (and, one might argue, to artistic practice as such), *In Girum* is, more than any other work since *Mémoires* (with which it shares both structural and thematic features), Debord's commemorative review and homage to the Lettrist and Situationist Internationals.

From the outset, *In Girum* raises the question of spectatorship that dominated the previous films. As the voice-over announces that this movie will make no concessions to the viewers, the opening image depicts, in Debord's words, "a contemporary audience in a movie theater, staring straight ahead and looking right at the spectators—in a perfect reverse shot—who thus see nothing but themselves on this screen"[154] (fig. 6.40). In the subsequent remarks on the current state of "separation," the "pseudo-experience" of the film audience is taken to be paradigmatic for the "pseudo-life" of quotidian alienation. Parallel with images of daily life in suburban "neo-houses," of spectators waiting in line to go to the cinema, of people playing Monopoly as they eat dinner, and so on, the voice-over argues that in fact the situation of employer and employee are quite similar, not least in their shared delusion—described as that of the "unhappy spectator"—that they are truly participating (in government, in success, in happiness, and so on) despite all evidence to the contrary. According to Debord, the mimetic appeal of a cinema based on the principle "when one loves life one goes to the movies" stems not from the supposed "realism" of the depiction but rather from the fact that, since this cinema is *just as impoverished as the real world,* both film and world are similar in that they are contemplated with the same indifference.

6.36
"Arkadin ends another story: 'Logical?' cries the frog as it drowns with the scorpion, 'Where is the logic in this?' 'I can't help it,' says the scorpion, 'it's my character . . . Let's drink to character!'" Shot of Orson Welles as Arkadin in *La société du spectacle* (OCC, p. 143)

Rejecting what he sees as the dominant cinematic practice of simply portraying meaningless events—a cinema "able to deceive boredom for the space of an hour by means of the reflection of that very same boredom"[155]—Debord characterizes his film as part of a project to destabilize the forms of "false consciousness" that have flourished under the current relations of production.[156] Having alerted the viewers that this film will not presuppose the "innocence" of its audience in order to lull them with scenes to be viewed through the "keyhole of a vulgar familiarity," Debord states:

> Since the cinema audience above all must be brought to think about a number of harsh truths that are of direct concern to it, but most of the time kept hidden, one cannot deny that a film which for once renders the difficult service of revealing to that audience that its own affliction is not as mysterious as it thinks, and may even not be incurable if only we could one day go so far as to abolish classes and the State; one cannot deny, I say, that such a film has, at least in this regard, some merit. It will have no others.[157]

This program, which determines the overall structure of *In Girum*, has ramifications for both the sound track (which carries the burden of responsibility) and the image track as well.

Responding to the criticism that because he does not "prove" his claims with images, his films are simply dogmatic, Debord lambasts the dominant fetishism of the image. In a move reminiscent of the Lettrist disdain for the photographic component of the cinema, Debord contends that, in fact, images as such can prove nothing, save perhaps the reigning deception. By *mis*using images however, by subjecting the cornerstones of the cinematic edifice to *détournement*, something may perhaps be revealed about the medium itself, Debord suggests, even if only negatively. The visual citations in *In Girum*—including sequences from *Les visiteurs du soir* (Marcel Carné, 1942), *Les enfants du paradis* (Marcel Carné, 1943–1945), *Orphée* (Jean Cocteau, 1950), *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (Michael Curtiz, 1936), *The Third Man* (Carol Reed, 1939), *They Died with Their Boots On* (Raoul Walsh, 1941), and many others—are thus either inserted into new contexts or provided with new voice-over texts taken, to cite just a few examples, from works by Bossuet, Shakespeare, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Pascal, Omar Khàyyàm, Gracian, Sun Tze, and Homer. Debord's position on the status of the image is actually articulated explicitly at an early point in the film. As we watch a scene in which the masked Zorro, leg trapped in the train tracks, frees himself in the last moment before the train passes by, the voice-over states:

> This is a film, for example, in which I only state truths about images that are all either insignificant or false; this is a film that has contempt for the visual dust of which it is composed. I want to conserve nothing of the language of this outdated art, except perhaps the reverse shot of the only world that it has observed and a *tracking shot* along the fleeting ideas of an epoch.[158]

6.37
"Pan across a large group of television screens which are broadcasting simultaneously all the sports events that are taking place at any moment at the 'Olympic Games' in Munich," *Réfutation de tous les jugements, tant élogieux qu'hostiles, qui ont été jusqu'ici portés sur le film "La société du spectacle"* (OCC, p. 163)

6.38
"In a newsreel film from 12 July 1936, [Robert] Salengro speaks on stage at a socialist meeting. A ridiculous and odious little man doing everything he can to give his appearance a Mussolini quality," *Réfutation de tous les jugements . . .* (OCC, p. 172)

6.39
"A publicity film pushing a brand of pants: on a music-hall stage, some men get dressed to the sound of music applauded by a female audience," *Réfutation de tous les jugements . . .* (OCC, p. 178)

Such disrespect is imperative, we learn, in order to counteract the impression (conveyed by hegemonic cinematic production in order to justify itself) that virtually nothing other than commercial spectacle has ever existed or *was even possible.* On the contrary, Debord asserts

> it is society and not technology that has made cinema what it is. The cinema could have been historical examination, theory, essay, memories. It could have been the film which I am making at this moment.[159]

The resistance manifested in the refusal on the part of the culture industry to allow *In Girum* to be screened is perhaps the best indication of the extent to which such "otherness" (and the unexplored possibilities it reveals) poses a very real threat.

Even more than the previous films, much of *In Girum* is about "an important subject": Guy Debord himself. Far from facile autobiography or narcissistic indulgence, however, this focus encompasses—as Debord puts it citing a line borrowed from *Orlando furioso*—"'the ladies (fig. 6.41), the knights, the weapons, the loves, the conversations and the audacious undertakings' of a unique era."[160] Indeed, the tenor of historical retrospection in *In Girum* is best conveyed by the title Debord had initially proposed in 1964 when planning a film on the exploits of the previous years: *Eloge de ce que nous avons aimé* (Homage to the things we loved). Foremost among these cherished memories are Debord's world (Paris, the "short-lived capital of perturbation"), his haunts (Saint-Germain-des-Prés), his heroes, his friends, and also his work. Images of a nineteen-year-old Debord, a nineteenth-century Parisian map, and aerial views of Paris (fig. 6.42) are coupled with citations from Dante, Li Po, and Machiavelli to evoke the quality of a bygone urban landscape—at this point there appears a scene from *Les enfants du paradis*—a magical Paris that no longer exists and on whose Left Bank there was "a neighborhood where the negative held court."[161] It was here, Debord notes, among a group of people whose only guiding principle was "Nothing is true, everything is permitted,"[162] that an extremism burst forth independent of any particular cause. At this point, the screen suddenly becomes entirely white as the sound track broadcasts a series of citations of phrases from *Hurlements* (themselves in turn already citations) until an image of an indignant audience at a theater appears, screaming from the balcony for the curtain to be drawn.[163]

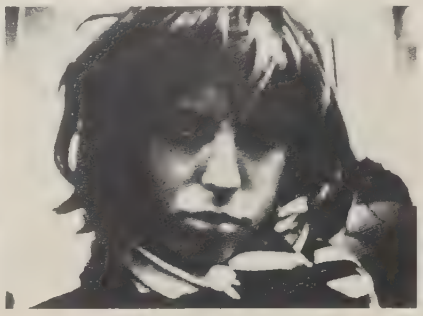
What follows is in effect an extended tribute to the members of the Lettrist and Situationist Internationals, to that group of individuals whose

> intention was nothing other than to trace, through [their] practice, a line of division between those who want to maintain the existing world and those who want nothing of it.[164]

As we hear accounts of various adventures—the Notre-Dame event, the planned bombing of the Eiffel Tower, and so on—we see images of Gil J Wolman, Ghislain de Marbaix, Asger Jorn, Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, Attila

6.40
"A contemporary audience in a movie theater, staring straight ahead and looking right at the spectators—in a perfect reverse shot—who thus see nothing but themselves on the screen," *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni* (OCC, p. 189)

6.41
"Sne who was the most beautiful that year" [Photograph by Ed van der Elsken], *In Girum* (OCC, p. 237)



6.42
"The sixth arrondissement seen from above, with the Seine in the foreground," *In Girum* (OCC, p. 223)

Kotányi, and Donald Nicholson-Smith interspersed with depictions of favorite SI spots in Paris—Les Halles, cafés in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, the Ile de la Cité (fig. 6.43)—as well as photographs of Debord. A short sequence about Ivan Chtcheglov, taken from an earlier unrealized film project entitled *Portrait d'Ivan Chtcheglov,* juxtaposes photographs of Chtcheglov with comic strip representations of Prince Valiant. Debord's voice-over commentary indicates that, despite the history of the SI's exclusions, scissions, and disputes, a profound allegiance toward these figures endured:

> When I speak about these people, I perhaps may seem to be grinning: but one should not take this seriously. I drank their wine. I remain faithful to them. And I do not believe that I have subsequently become, in any way, better than what they themselves were at that time.[165]

Scattered among the above photo portraits are sequences of Venice—the only new footage shot expressly for *In Girum*—that are suddenly given new significance by a subsequent shot that pans across the people involved in "mapping out the program best suited to throw the totality of social life into total suspicion"[166]—the participants at the eighth conference of the SI in Venice in 1969.

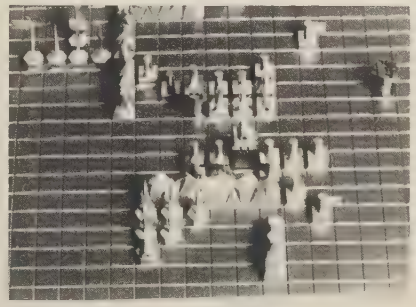
A tracking shot of the *Kriegspiel* [*sic*] (fig. 6.44), a board game based on Clausewitz's theory of war developed by Debord in the 1950s as an exercise in strategy and dialectic,[167] sets the tone for the next section of *In Girum*, one that is concerned with the problem of strategy. Following a pan across a map of the Old World from the Roman to the Chinese empires, there are shots of West Point cadets about to set out for battle in the US Civil War and then various detourned images of the Light Brigade (figs. 6.45–6.48) making its famous charge in the "Valley of Death" at Balaklava. These are accompanied by voice-over observations on the unavoidable compromises that arise in the course of the reality of actual struggle: politics, Debord reminds the "spectators of history," always takes place in the dirty, risky space of uncertainty. Theoretical work, Debord points out, also has a tactical dimension. It is just one of many weapons in a revolutionary arsenal and, like these, it too must be deployed at the strategic moment. Furthermore, he adds,

> just as theories must be replaced because they become worn out by their decisive victories and even more so by their partial defeats, so too no living epoch has ever arisen from a theory: rather, such an epoch is above all a game, a conflict, a voyage.[168]

As an example of tactical practice, Debord unpacks the logic behind his self-imposed "strategy" of obscurity. His resolute refusal of the media stems from the commonplace insight "that this society signs a sort of peace treaty with its most outspoken enemies by giving them a spot in its spectacle."[169] It is precisely this recuperation that Debord prides himself in having resisted. And as if to underscore his tactic of obscurity, the next image is followed by a text frame that announces: "Here the spectators, having been deprived of everything, will even be deprived of images."[170] Then, in a move by now readable

6.43
"The Seine and western tip of the Ile de la Cité," *In Girum* (OCC, p. 239)

6.44
"Establishing shots and close-ups of a 'Kriegspiel' [board game], in which two armies are deployed," *In Girum* (OCC, p. 213)



6.45–6.46
The Light Brigade, in battle formation behind its flag-bearers, begins its famous charge through the 'Valley of Death' at Balaklava" [Both shots

as an auto-citation, the screen goes black and remains so for the entire duration of the subsequent monologue. This is finally punctuated by a series of shots of the *Kriegspiel* and the announcement of the "only good news of the current presentation": that the results of Debord's extensive research into strategy will *not* be presented in cinematic form.

What Debord *does* present in the final section of *In Girum* is an answer to the nagging question: "What now?" The effect of the SI, Debord had claimed on the sound track, was to destroy once and for all the air of innocence cultivated by the "dominant system of deception."[171] Yet, as he is careful to point out,

> Avant-gardes have only one sole moment; and the best thing that can happen to them is, in the fullest sense of the term, for them to have *made their moment*.[172]

Where does this leave Debord in 1978? In visual terms, the response takes the form of a juxtaposition of a topography of Debord's previous endeavors (as well as a selection of the comrades—intellectual, amorous, revolutionary, and otherwise—that accompanied him at various stages) with the more recent traces of the violence (in urban planning, commodity production, and elsewhere) of advanced capitalism. Images of Florence (where Debord lived during a period of exile), of various houses that Debord lived in at different times, of Alice Becker-Ho (fig. 6.49), Cardinal de Retz, Clausewitz, of the dadaists and various Situationists, as well as a series of photographs taken of Debord from age nineteen to age forty-five (fig. 6.50 and 6.51), are juxtaposed with shots of "neo-Paris" with its "neo-houses," of breweries of "neo-beer," of industrial waste sites and "other landscapes ravaged for sake of the surplus of merchandise." On the one hand, the situation is grim. Seen dialectically, however, the victories of the enemy are themselves a negative articulation of everything that still needs to be changed. Such optimism in the face of overwhelming setbacks was even expressed by Marx, as Debord points out in a citation that conveys the concluding tone of film:

> It was already the dawn of that tiresome day that we now see coming to an end when the young Marx wrote to Ruge: "You can hardly say that I value the present time too highly; and yet if I nevertheless do not despair, it is only because of the desperate situation of this time, which fills me with hope."[173]

The polyvalence of the present development is also captured by the palindromic structure of the Latin title (as emphasized by the opening credit sequence, it can be read in both directions). Within the film the title is read as a figure for the hopelessness of the current epoch:

> But nothing translated the dead-end and the restlessness of the present time better than the old phrase that circles back around itself completely, given its construction letter by letter as a labyrinth from which one cannot exit, and thereby conveying perfectly the form and the content of perdition.[174]

taken by Debord from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, the 1936 film directed by Michael Curtiz], *In Girum* (OCC, p. 257)

6.47–6.48
"The Russian chief of staff is astonished at the strange recklessness of this frontal attack. Cannons open fire. The soldiers, advancing directly toward them, fall by the dozens. The Light Brigade begins to gallop and continues its charge in open ranks. It is almost entirely annihilated" [Shot taken from *The Charge of the Light Brigade*], *In Girum* (OCC, p. 258)

However, in the concluding text frame of the film, which reads "To be recommenced from the start," the palindromic structure reappears, now as the more positive appeal to re-read (the text of the film), to re-make, re-write, or re-think from the start (the history, the revolutionary ideals, the lives which *In Girum* describes).

When it was finally screened in 1981, *In Girum* provoked a great variety of critical responses, ranging from the by now standard anti-intellectual accusations of boring obscurantism (*Le Monde*) and intolerable pretentiousness (*Télérama*) to hymns of praise that placed the film in a pantheon alongside Mallarmé and Cocteau (*Les Nouvelles littéraires*), compared the film with the modernist subjectivity developed in Marguerite Duras's *Aurelia Steiner* and Straub/Huillet's *Fortini cani* (*Feuille foudre*), and included Debord in the "exclusive club of great filmmakers" (*Quinzaine littéraire*). The focus on the "second-degree spectacle" of the film's journalistic reception that was undertaken cinematographically for *La société du spectacle* then took on yet another form. One year after the screenings (and pirate broadcast)[175] of *In Girum* a modest volume appeared from Champ Libre entitled *Ordures et décombres déballés à la sortie du film "in girum imus nocte et consumimur igni"* (Refuse and rubble unpacked upon the release of "in girum imus nocte et consumimur igni"). This small book contains nothing but the reprints of fourteen reviews of *In Girum*, without a single word of commentary![176] Here, at its culmination, Debord's cinematic practice has functioned as a means of provoking a highly indicative reception that is then presented as material to be subjected, in turn, to a political symptomatology.

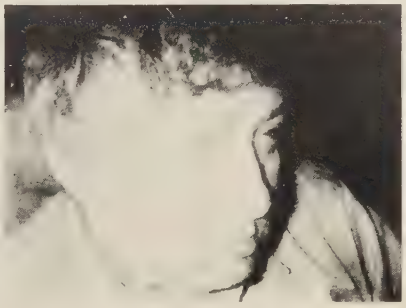
VI

In "Guy Debord et le problème du maudit" (Guy Debord and the problem of the accursed), the opening essay in the first collection of Debord's film scenarios *Contre le cinéma*, Asger Jorn warns against canonizing Debord as a filmmaker. To do so, he argues, would have the anesthetizing effect of inserting him within the very economy of stardom and cinephilic "achievement" that his work attempts to undermine. Furthermore it would fail to recognize that for Debord the cinema *as a medium* was incidental, just one of a number of vehicles—including journals, pamphlets, "metagraphical" collages, board games, translations, and radio programs[177]—employed at various points to explore different questions and make certain points. Despite its focus on Debord's six films, the present essay does not propose to enshrine Debord as an avant-garde cinematic "auteur." Rather, it hopes to direct attention to an important site of creative activity within the SI project whose significance both for the SI and for the history of experimental film and film theory has been heretofore ignored. For Debord's theoretical and artistic production, the films constitute an important and largely unexplored domain by means of which numerous problems can be cast in a new light. Read together with Debord's prolific output as a writer, the films function sometimes as an elaboration, sometimes as an experiment in practice, and sometimes as a translation into another language of central theoretical concerns such as the analysis of spectacle. This is true not only of films such as *La société du spectacle*, where the intimate connection with Debord's theoretical work is manifest,

6.49
"Alice [Becker-Ho] and Celeste," *In Girum* (OCC, p. 269)

6.50
"[Guy] Debord: age nineteen," *In Girum* (OCC, p. 273)

6.51
"[Guy Debord:] age forty-five," *In Girum* (OCC, p. 273)



but also of his other films as well. It is in these films—veritable laboratories of *détournement*—that one finds, for example, the most sustained examples of Debord's artistic practice and an important meditation and instantiation of the practice and politics of citation, as well as a critical review of the theory and practice of the SI itself.

The members of both the Lettrist and the Situationist Internationals were very aware of the importance of their films within the development of cinema. Although the Lettrist films from the early 1950s are described in an editorial note in a 1954 issue of *Potlatch* as being "of mere historical significance,"[178] it is acknowledged in a later issue of the same journal that the scarcity of these films also permits subsequent filmmakers to claim as theirs innovations introduced by the Lettrists many years earlier. Always alert to the plagiarism of their ideas (despite an often proclaimed nonproprietary relation to the products of intellectual labor), the editors regret the current unavailability of their films, thanks to which Norman McLaren's *Blinkity Blank* (1955)—a film that incorporates extended black sequences and various Lettrist practices of *cinéma ciselant*—was given honorable mention at the eighth Cannes Film Festival. It is not without some bitterness that McLaren is warmly congratulated for providing hard evidence that, as they put it, "despite various interdictions, the most scandalous innovations can make their way even into the heart of the official propaganda organizations of our enemies."[179] It is thus not entirely surprising that when the plans were drawn up a few years later for a Situationist library in Silkeborg (Denmark), the conception of the envisaged archive included a "cinema annex" to house copies of all SI films.[180]

Without any doubt, there is much in the Lettrist cinema and the later cinematic works by Debord that has subsequently been taken up and explored—whether consciously or not is unimportant here—in "pioneering" works of the postwar American and European avant-garde, "underground" cinema.[181] As space considerations preclude an exploration here of the full extent of the revisionist ramifications entailed by the rediscovery of the films of the LI and SI, I will limit myself to the following preliminary suggestions. In its radical reduction of expressive means and the slowness of its pace, for example, *Hurlements* antedates both Stan Brackage's *Reflections on Black* (1955) and Peter Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer* (1958–1960), as well as certain films made by Warhol or Michael Snow over a decade later. The aesthetic of cinematic *détournement* developed in Debord's subsequent films could be productively compared in turn with the more aestheticized work on found footage undertaken in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Bruce Connor. Debord's films also could be argued to be a crucial moment in the genealogy of the "theory film," a largely ignored genre that one could trace back to Eisenstein's project to film *Kapital* and which, by way of Godard, Marker, and Resnais, would also include works by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen (*Penthesilea* [1974] and *Riddles of the Sphinx* [1977]), Yvonne Rainer (*The Man Who Envied Women* [1985]), and Manuel de Landa (*Raw Nerves: A Lacanian Thriller* [1979]).[182]

6.52
"Image of the cover of a detective novel entitled *Imposture*. A woman in profile; a bit further stands a man with a glass in his hand," *Critique de la séparation* (OCC, pp. 51–52/*Contre*, p. 87)

Godard's indebtedness to Debord, from whom he learned a great deal, itself merits a particularly detailed examination. In what appears to be a rather marked instance of unacknowledged appropriation, an inordinate amount of Debord's concerns reappear in later works by Godard, both in terms of iconographic or thematic concerns and on a formal level as well (fig. 6.52). As regards the former, one encounters in Godard's films the sociological interest in Paris (*Two or Three Things I Know About Her*), the *détournement* of advertisements, legal documents, and citations (in *Weekend* there are quotations from Emily Brontë, Balsamo, and Saint-Just!), and of sequences from other films (*Le petit soldat* employs the "Tell me lies" sequence from *Johnny Guitar*). One even encounters the same "stars": years before she became the leading actress in numerous films by Godard as well as his wife, Anna Karina appeared as the actress in the Monsavon commercial detourned by Debord in *Sur le passage* (see fig. 6.6). In formal terms, Godard takes up the philosophical voice-over, the use of black sequences (in *Le gai savoir* and *Vladimir and Rosa*), paratactic, non-narrative constructions, refusal of sound-image synchrony, extended use of text frames, the exposure of the "means of production," intensive intertextuality, and so on. Indeed, well over a decade before Godard's *Vent d'est*, Debord was producing a revolutionary, materialist "counter-cinema" that met all criteria established in Peter Wollen's discussion of this alternative cinematographic practice: narrative intransitivity, estrangement, foregrounding, multiple diegesis, aperture, unpleasure, reality.[183]

The comparison with Godard is motivated not only by the fact that for many years Godard was the "good object" of an historically, semiologically, and politically informed film theory. Nor is this simply a question of locating "originality" or of establishing vectors of influence. What is at stake here is the claim that, well before Godard, Debord's "epistemological" cinema had already resolved the dichotomy of the "two avant-gardes," representing a "third avant-garde" that synthesizes a formal modernism (a politics of the signifier) and a semiotic and ideological reflexivity (politics of the signified). Moreover, what one might call the "political modernism" of Debord's cinema avoids, I would argue, the various pitfalls—formalist essentialism, aestheticist myopia, politically naive fetishism of reflexivity, and so on—typical of certain avant-garde cultural practices linked to radical political agendas.[184] Specifically, Debord's films do not manifest the problematic characteristics of the "epistemological modernism" identified by Sylvia Harvey in her study *May '68 and Film Culture*: they do *not* "replace an interest in the *relationship* between specific means of aesthetic representation and a social reality conceived of as distinct from those means, with an exclusive concern with the means of representation . . ."; they do *not* make any essentialist claims regarding the inherent politics of any specific cinematic form; they do *not* articulate the problem of formal innovation solely in terms of the internal architectonic of the "filmic text" but rather insist on "the insertion of that text within a particular apparatus, within a distribution or exchange specific to a particular society and a particular historical

moment"; and finally, in their repeated emphasis on spectatorship and the structure of separation, they do *not* disparage pleasure and "offer a puritanical defense of the 'work' (of reading, of meaning production) that the modernist text invites the reader to perform."[185] Rather, in the socio-historical analysis of the separation that structures the spectacle, the possibility of an engaged, *enjoyable*, nonseparated experience—such as that of the *dérive*—is always held out as the aim of an alternative model of cinematic practice. In Debord's own words:

> It seems to me that my work [in the cinema], very succinct but extended over a period of twenty-six years, did indeed correspond to the principal criteria of modern art: (1) a very marked originality from the start and the firm decision never to do "the same thing" two times in a row, while still maintaining a personal style and a set of thematic concerns that are always easily recognizable; (2) an understanding of contemporary society, *id est* explaining it by criticizing it, since ours is a time which is distinctly lacking less in apologetics than in criticism; (3) finally, to have been revolutionary *in form as well as in content*, something which always struck me as following the direction of all the "unitary" aspirations of modern art, toward the point where that art attempted to go beyond art.[186]

In its dismantling of the spectacle, the cinema of Guy Debord is thus also the dismantling of the (modernist, avant-garde, political) cinema as well.

Notes

An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Society for Cinema Studies annual conference in Montreal (May 1987) on a panel entitled "Dismantling the Spectacle." I am grateful to the panel chair, Edward Dimendberg (UC Santa Cruz), for provoking that initial engagement with the topic and to Lindsay Waters (Harvard University Press) and Greil Marcus for the critical mediation that made this further exploration possible.

1. Ken Knabb, ed. and trans., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), p. 33. (Where published translations are employed within the body of the text, the original language citations are provided following the translated reference. Where no English-language source is given, the translation is mine.) Guy Debord, *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps,* in *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1978), p. 31.

2. Debord, *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 207–8.

3. This picture, taken by J. R. Eyerman, has since become a veritable cliché not only for the alienation of late consumer culture but also for the ten years following World War II: it appears, for example, on T-shirts, bags, and buttons as well as on the cover of the brochure that accompanied an exhibition of photographs from *Life* magazine held at the International Center of Photography (New York) and entitled: "The Second Decade, 1946–1955." Few realize, however, that this depiction of the latest stage in the drive towards cinematic verisimilitude exists in at least two versions: the one, employed for the cover of the *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 1970, repr. 1977 and 1983), depicts its elegantly attired audience in a virtually trance-like state of absorption, their faces grim, their lips pursed. In the other shot of the same audience, however, the 3-D spectators are laughing, their expressions of hilarity conveying the pleasure of an uproarious, active spectatorship.

4. It is entirely appropriate that these illustrations appear only in the unauthorized translation of *Society of the Spectacle* published in America, the country in many ways paradigmatic for the culture of consumption and alienation that is the focus of the study. In the first edition of *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967), the pirate German edition of *Die Gesellschaft des Spektakels* (Düsseldorf: Projektgruppe Gegengesellschaft, 1971), and the "authorized [German] translation" by Jean-Jacques Raspaud (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1978) there are no illustrations whatsoever. Only the current French

reprint (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1971) has an image on its cover, a reproduction of a turn-of-the-century world map whose colors indicate the current and projected state of global commercial development. Debord's account of the choice of this map can be found in his small book, *Considérations sur l'assassinat de Gérard Lebovici* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1985), pp. 33–34.

5. The first 34 theses of *La société du spectacle* were first published under the title "La séparation achevée" in the SI journal *Internationale situationniste* 11 (October 1967), pp. 43–48 (hereafter *IS*).

6. The translation of *détournement*, one of the key terms of Situationist aesthetic practice, poses a number of problems. Its rendition as "diversion" in the American edition of *Society of the Spectacle* (see, for example, Thesis 208) is unacceptable because it is burdened with the connotation of "distraction." In French, *détournement*— deflection, turning in a different direction— is also employed to signal detours and to refer to embezzlement, swindle, abduction, and hijacking. The criminal and violent quality of the latter four connotations are closer to the SI practice of illicitly appropriating the products of culture and abducting or hijacking them to other destinations. Nevertheless, these terms are also too marked to be employed. Instead, I have followed the practice adopted by Ken Knabb in his *Anthology* (cf his footnote on this subject on p. 371) and have simply anglicized the term.

7. This visual material, an important supplement to the articles in the journal, is unfortunately not available to the English reader since, unlike the two-volume German edition of the journal, *Situationistische Internationale* (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1977), which retains the images and even the layout of the original French version, the selections published in translation in the Knabb anthology have no illustrations.

8. *IS* 11 (October 1967), p. 57; first emphasis in translation is mine.

9. Debord, *In Girum*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 190.

10. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 33; cf. the epigraph that opens this essay.

11. Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" in *Holzwege*, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977 [1938]), pp. 73–110; translated as "The Age of the World Picture," in Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Garland Publishers, 1977), pp. 115–54, esp. 128ff.; Jean-Louis Baudry, *L'effet cinéma* (Paris: Editions Albatros, 1978) and "The Apparatus: Metaphysical Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," in Phil Rosen, ed., *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 299–318; Jean-Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible," in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 121–42.

12. Debord, *In Girum*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 207–8; cf. the second epigraph that opens this essay.

13. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 88; "La cinquième conférence de l'I.S. à Göteborg," *IS* 7 (April 1962), pp. 26–27. Compare also "Le sens du déperissement de l'art," *IS* 3 (December 1959), pp. 4 and 7.

14. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, Thesis 210.

15. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 111, translation modified; "L'opération contre-situationniste dans divers pays," *IS* 8 (January 1963), p. 24.

16. "Avec et contre le cinéma," *IS* 1 (June 1958), pp. 8–9.

17. Ibid., p. 8.

18. Ibid., p. 9.

19. Ibid.

20. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 215; René Viénet, "Les situationnistes et les nouvelles formes d'action contre la politique et l'art," *IS* 11 (October 1967), p. 35.

21. Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 55–56; "Le détournement comme négation et comme prélude," *IS* 3 (December 1959), p. 11.

22. Guy Debord and Gil J Wolman, "Instructions for the Use of Detournement," in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 12 (translation of title modified); "Mode d'emploi du détournement," in *Les lèvres nues* 8 (May 1956), p. 6. For the epistemological genealogy of the SI it is important to note that the authors of this theoretically central article were listed on the cover of *Les lèvres nues* as "Aragon and André Breton"! Both the text and the cover are reprinted in the very useful collection of reprints of rare original materials edited by Gérard Berreby, *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale situationniste*

(Paris: Editions Allia, 1985), pp. 301–9. Another important aesthetic affinity is evident from the publication of a German translation of this essay—"Gebrauchs-anweisung für die Entwendung"—in a collection of the poetry of Lautréamont [Isidore Ducasse], *Poésie* (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1979).

23. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 12; Berreby, *Documents*, p. 306.

24. *La dialectique peut-elle casser des briques* is an amusing example of the use of *détournement* to rewrite or re-function—to use a rendition of Brecht's term *Umfunktionierung* that is most appropriate here— an otherwise highly compromised product of the culture industry. This full-length 35mm color film by Doo Kwang Gee is a transformation by Gerard Cohen and René Viénet of a classic Hong Kong Kung-Fu film (originally titled *The Crush*) into a didactic suspense narrative illustrating the conflict between the proletariat and the bureaucrats! Produced in 1973 by "L'Oiseau de Minerve," the movie—which introduces itself as "the first entirely 'detourned' film in the history of cinema"—effects this metamorphosis simply by supplying a new synchronized sound track. As it is (curiously) part of the permanent collection of the ultra-hightech Vidéothèque de Paris, it can be screened upon demand. Another Chinese film detourned by Inez Tan and René Viénet through the use of French subtitles, *Du sang chez les Taoïsts* (1971; color, 80 min.), seems to be currently unavailable. Very little information is available concerning the three further films that Viénet and his collaborators are supposed to have detourned: *Une petite culotte pour l'été*, *Une soutanne n'a pas de braguette*, and *L'aubergine est farcie*.

25. "Panorama intelligent de l'avant-garde à la fin de 1955," *Potlatch* 24 (November 1955); all issues of the journal have been reprinted in a single volume with an introduction by Guy Debord, *Potlatch, 1954–1957* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1985), above citation, p. 186; the journal can also be found in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 161–261, above citation, p. 231.

26. René Viénet, "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action Against Politics and Art," in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 215–16; "Les situationnistes et les nouvelles formes d'action contre la politique et l'art," *IS* 11 (October 1967), p. 35.

27. Guy Debord, "Pour le debat d'orientation du printemps 1970: Note sur la première serie de textes," in his *Textes rares: 1957–1970* (Paris: n. p., 1981), pp. 34–36.

28. "Chaque film pourrait donner à un ou deux situs travaillant comme assistants l'occasion de maîtriser leur propre style dans ce language; et l'immanquable succès de nos oeuvres apporterait aussi la base économique de la production future de ces camarades. *L'élargissement de notre audience serait décisif"* (Ibid., p. 36).

29. Guy Debord, "Cinema and Revolution," in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 297–98 (translation modified); "Le cinéma et la révolution," *IS* 12 (September 1969), p. 105.

30. This description as well as the label for Godard further on stem from the "List of Insulted Names" included in the very useful index volume by Jean-Jacques Raspaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer, *L'Internationale situationniste: Chronologie/Bibliographie/Protagonistes* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972), pp. 25–65.

31. The following chronological list offers a preliminary bibliography of the film reviews and/or texts on film published in the journals of the Lettrist and Situationist Internationals. Where no author is listed the texts appeared unsigned; lead articles are indicated as such; data regarding reprints and short summaries of content follow the main entry:

"Le grand âge du cinéma: Le 8e festival de Cannes sera mauvais," *Potlatch* 19 (lead article; April 1955); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, pp. 124–25; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 205

"Encore la jeunnesse pourrie," *Potlatch* 19 (April 1955); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, pp. 126–27; also in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 205–6
Review of *Marianne de ma jeunesse* (Julien Duvivier, 1955)

"Le grand chemin qui mène a Rome," *Potlatch* 21 (lead article; June 1955); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, pp. 142–43; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 213
Review of *La Strada* (Federico Fellini, 1954)

"La Bible est le seul scénariste qui ne déçoive pas Cecil B. De Mille," *Potlatch* 21 (June 1955); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, p. 147; Berreby, *Documents*, p. 215
Review of *Blinkity Black* [*sic*] (Norman McLaren, 1955)
[Correct title is *Blinkity Blank*]

"Au vestaire," *Potlatch* 25 (lead article; January 1956); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, pp. 191–95; also in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 233–34
Review of *La pointe courte* (Agnès Varda, 1956)

"Le cinéma après Alain Resnais," *IS* 3 (December 1959), pp. 8–10
Review of *Hiroshima mon amour* (Alain Resnais, 1959)

Michèle Bernstein, "Sunset Boulevard," *IS* 7 (April 1962), pp. 42–46
Review of *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961)

G.-E. Debord, "Pour un jugement révolutionnaire de l'art," *Notes critiques: Bulletin de recherche et d'orientation révolutionnaire* 3 (Bordeaux) (2 trimestre 1962); reprinted in Debord, *Textes rares*, pp. 13–17; for a translation, see Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 310–14. Debord's text was a position paper intended as the basis for a discussion between the SI and the group Pouvoir Ouvrier that ultimately did not take place. It was a response to a review of Godard's *A bout de souffle* by S. Chatel published in *Socialisme ou barbarie* 6 (December 1960–February 1961), pp. 104–7

"L'I.S. vous l'avait bien dit!" *IS* 9 (August 1964), p. 23
A series of citations about Alain Resnais

"Le rôle de Godard," *IS* 10 (March 1966), pp. 58–59; for a translation, see Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 175–76
On the films of Jean-Luc Godard

"Le cinéma et la révolution," *IS* 12 (September 1969), pp. 104–5; for a translation, see Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 297–98
Review of *Le gai savoir* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1968).

32. François Dufrêne, *Tambours du jugement premier*, *Ion* 1 (April 1952), Numéro spécial sur le cinéma, Marc-Gilbert Guillaumin [Marc, O], General Editor, p. 195 (footnote 1).

33. Beneath a full page photograph of Debord on the second page of the catalogue *Destruktion af RSG-6: En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk Internationale* (Odense, Denmark: Galerie EXI, 1963), for example, one reads the following caption: "GUY DEBORD: filminstruktør og redaktør—film director and editor—cinéaste et directeur de revue. c/o 'Internationale Situationniste,' B.P. 75–06 Paris." Similarly, the description of the author of *La société du spectacle* on the back cover of the Editions Champ Libre reprint (Paris, 1971) begins: "Se disant cinéaste" (Calls himself a filmmaker).

34. Debord at various times announced films that he was planning or hoping to make. These include the following four titles of *films prévus* that are listed on the back cover of *Contre le cinéma* (see note 38 below), framed by the two lines "Prochainement sur les écrans . . . Des films écrits et réalisés par Guy Debord" (Coming soon to the screen . . . Films written and directed by Guy Debord): *Portrait d'Ivan Chtcheglov, Les aspects ludiques manifestes et latents dans la fronde, Eloge de ce que nous avons aimé dans les images d'une époque,* and *Préface à une nouvelle théorie du mouvement révolutionnaire.* Elsewhere Debord states that he wanted to make a film of Raoul Vaneigem's *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967, repr. 1981), translated as *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (London: Practical Paradise Publications, 1975); see "Pour le débat d'orientation du printemps 1970: Note sur la première serie de textes," in Debord, *Textes rares*, p. 36.

35. One of the few exceptions is an intelligent article in a rather obscure Austrian art journal by Roberto Ohrt, "Wäre ich nicht Alexander wäre ich gern Diogenes," *Durch* 3/4 (November 1987), pp. 27–48, translated by Ian Brunskill in the same issue as "If I Wasn't Alexander, I Would Like to Be Diogenes," pp. 161–75. Ohrt has also published an interesting piece on the SPUR group and the German side of the SI story: "Die Spur von der Kunst zur Situationistischen Internationale," in Veit Loers, ed., *Gruppe SPUR, 1958–1965* (Regensburg: Städtische Galerie, 1986), pp. 33–44.

36. Guy Debord, *Considérations sur l'assassinat*, p. 48. Debord's most recent book, *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1988) is also dedicated to Lebovici: "A la mémoire de Gérard Lebovici, assassiné à Paris, le 5 mars 1984, dans un guet-apens resté mystérieux."

37. In response to a query as to whether the films could ever be seen *outside* France, Debord explained to me in a letter of 29 May 1987 that his emphasis on France was in response to the particular injustice perpetrated by the French press. "Naturally I should have said: never again anywhere." In the remainder of the missive Debord goes on to articulate why, in light of the recent restructuration of the film industry, he was concerned about the manner in which his films might be exploited and thus decided to disavow in advance any and all screenings of his work. However, as he notes in conclusion: "It goes without saying that I do not disavow a single word or even a single image of my entire cinematographic work."

38. Guy Debord, *Contre le cinéma* (Aarhus, Denmark: L'Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé/Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie, 1964). This volume, now out of print, includes the complete scenarios and selected images from Debord's first three films (*Hurlements en faveur de Sade, Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps,* and *Critique de la séparation*) along with a prefatory essay by Asger Jorn entitled "Guy Debord et le problème du maudit" (pp. 3–8). The German translation by Pierre Gallissaires and Hanna Mittelstädt entitled *Gegen den Film: Filmskripte* (Hamburg: Edition Nautilus, 1978) drops three of the four explanatory notes that follow the scenario of *Hurlements*, but provides the full text of "Grande fête de nuit" under the title "Eine große Nachtfete."

39. Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques.* This hardback volume, which features a map of metropolitan Paris with subway routes on its dust jacket, includes the scenarios from *Contre le cinéma* (minus the introductory essay by Asger Jorn and the technical data supplied for each film). It also contains a selection of stills from each film; the format for these images, however, is slightly smaller than in *Contre le cinéma.* An Italian translation of the collection by Paolo Salvadori was published under the title *Opere cinematografiche complete, 1952–1978* (Rome: Arcana Editrice, 1980).

40. Debord, *Hurlements,* in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 7.

41. The standard work on Lettrist poetry is Jean-Paul Curtay's *La poésie lettriste* (Paris: Seghers, 1974). For English-language material on Lettrism, see *Visible Language* 17 (Summer 1983), a special issue that includes introductory discussions of various aspects of the movement, translations of primary texts by Isou and Lemaître, as well as a chronology and bibliography. For a short illustrated discussion of Lettrist work in the plastic arts, see Carol Cutler, "Paris: The Lettrist Movement," *Art in America* 58 (January–February 1970), pp. 117–19. The literature on Lettrist cinema is almost as limited as that on the cinema of the SI: see, for example, the short piece by Frédérique Devaux, "Approaching Letterist Cinema," trans. David W. Seaman, in the above mentioned issue of *Visible Language*, pp. 48–56. Devaux has also published a very useful "Petite introduction au cinéma lettriste" in her journal *7ème Art* 12 (Spring–Summer 1988), unpaginated. I am grateful to Ms. Devaux for her generosity in providing me with material that was a valuable source of general orientation for my research on the Lettrist genealogy of Debord's early work in film. In Italian a discussion of "Il cinema lettrista francese," complete with bibliography and short sections on Isou and Lemaître, can be found in the well-documented catalogue *Cine qua non* (Florence: Vallecchi Editore, 1979), pp. 67–76.

42. Dominique Noguez, "The Experimental Cinema in France," trans. Alister Sanderson, *Millennium Film Journal* 1 (Spring–Summer 1978). In light of the fact that none of the studies of avant-garde, underground, or experimental cinema (for example, those by Jean Mitry, Parker Tyler, and David Curtis) as much as mentions Lettrist cinema, Noguez must be credited as the first to point out in print both its aesthetic significance and its revisionist ramifications for the history of postwar avant-garde cinema. In a 1976 essay on the state of experimental cinema in France, Noguez remarks in a footnote that the work of Isou and Lemaître constitutes "an 'underground' French cinema whose historical and aesthetic importance has not yet been grasped. To do so is today one of the most pressing tasks of a criticism worthy of the name" (Dominique Noguez, "Qu'est-ce que la cinéma expérimental? Sa situation en France," in *Une histoire du cinéma* [Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1976], p. 51, note 23). A few years later, in his study *Eloge du cinéma expérimental: Définitions, jalons, perspectives* (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1979), Noguez follows up on his earlier claim and devotes a short section to the Lettrist cinema (pp. 101–4), which is described as "a movement that has been ignored for much too long and whose innovations are so numerous and go in so many different directions that one should stress their *avant-garde* character (in the strong sense of the term) as well as the fact that these preceded a number of the works produced by the American 'underground' cinema" (p. 101). In the years following this publication, Lettrist films began to be "rediscovered" with increasing regularity: in 1980 the Pompidou Center held a retrospective of the films of Lemaître, and in 1982 the show *Thirty Years of Experimental Cinema in France* curated by Noguez (which subsequently travelled to the USA, Canada, and Japan) included a number of Lettrist works.

43. Jean-Isidore Isou, *Esthétique du cinéma* (Paris: Ur, 1953). The following cursory remarks can hardly do justice to a work that deserves a much more detailed treatment than is possible here. A helpful overview can be found in Frédérique Devaux's "Notes sur *Esthétique du cinéma* de Isidore Isou," in *Revue d'histoire du cinéma* 5 (Spring 1981).

44. In a text by Maurice Lemaître "written especially for American readers" the Isouian distinction is explained as follows: "The *Amplic (amplique) phase* is the period in which the art 'swells' and in which public interest is high because it is constructed around *pretexts exterior to the art itself*: anecdotes (battles, epics, divine struggles), sentiments (romantic) or ideas (philosophical, social, etc.). . . . The second phase is called the *Chiseling (ciselante) phase*, and is the period in which the art turns in upon itself" (Maurice Lemaître, "What is Letterism?" [*sic*], trans. and adapted by Lowell Bair, in *Ur: La dictature lettriste* 3 (1952), pp. 47–48.

45. "This is the first time that one presents a *manifesto of cinema in the cinema*. It is the first time that one shows a ciné-club in the cinema, which is to say, that one prefers reflection or *debates on cinema in the cinema to ordinary cinema as such,"* (Jean-Isidore Isou, *Traité de bave et d'éternité,* 35mm BW, sound, 175 min.). The scenario is contained in Isou, *Oeuvres de spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), pp. 7–88; above citation, p. 27. This volume comes with a red banderole wrapped around it on which the publisher announces: "The transformation of the theater and the cinema." Begun on 15 August 1950 and completed in May of the following year, the film's original length of four and a half hours was reduced for "practical reasons." At the premiere of the first version of the film (which caused a near riot among the journalist audience) on 20 April 1951, the last day of the Cannes Film Festival, *Traité* was awarded the "Prix des spectateurs d'avant garde" and also the "Prix en marge du Festival de Cannes" by a renegade jury that included Jean Cocteau (some of the press reactions to this screening are reprinted in *7ème Art* 8). It premiered in Paris on 23 May 1951—the very day the final version was completed—at the Cinema Alexandra and then ran from 25 January to 7 February at the Studio de l'Etoile. The poster for the Paris premiere, designed by Jean Cocteau, is reproduced in small format on the cover of *7ème Art* 12.

46. Isou, *Traité*, in *Oeuvres de spectacle*, p. 15. Isou's rhetoric is strikingly similar to a proclamation by Dziga Vertov published (admittedly under very different circumstances but with surprisingly analogous imperatives) nearly 30 years earlier:

> WE declare old films, the romantic, the theatricalized etc., to be leprous.
> —Don't come near!
> —Don't look!
> —Mortally dangerous!
> —Contagious.
>
> WE affirm the future of cinema art by rejecting its present. The death of 'cinematography' is necessary so that the art of cinema may live. WE *call for the acceleration of its death.*

Dziga Vertov, "We. A Version of a Manifesto," in Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents*, trans. Richard Taylor (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 69.

47. Isou, *Traité,* in *Oeuvres de spectacle*, p. 24. Further on Isou employs a classically philosophical rhetorical device in order to argue that a destroyed photograph *must* be superior to the ordinary photograph since otherwise the former could not have destroyed the latter (p. 75)!

48. *Ion* 1 (April 1952) (see note 32 above). The table of contents of *Ion* and the Debord scenario are reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 111–25. Although Maurice Lemaître's film *Le film est déja commencé* is missing from this Lettrist pantheon, there is a full page advertisement for the published scenario, Maurice Lemaître, *Le film est déja commencé? Séance de cinéma* (Paris: Editions André Bonne, 1952). This volume also contains a lengthy preface by Isidore Isou.

49. In the notice to the reader that prefaces the volume, one reads: "The only set of values with which the members of this journal are in agreement remains Isou's complete system which has been revealed to us either in written or oral form. It is the point around which our traditional or original opinions are unified for the moment" *Ion* 1 ([April 1952], p. 6).

50. "Doyen des Lettristes: Wolman a 24 ans," in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 281.

51. "Des hommes insatisfaits de ce qu'on leur a donné dépassent le monde des expressions officielles et le festival de sa pauvreté.
Après **L'ESTHETIQUE DU CINEMA** d'Isidore **ISOU**,
TAMBOURS DU JUGEMENT PREMIER, l'essai de cinéma imaginaire de François **DUFRENE**, systématise à l'extrême l'épuisement des moyens du film, en le situant au delà de toutes ses mécaniques.
Guy-Ernest **DEBORD** avec
HURLEMENTS EN FAVEUR DE SADE, arrive au bout du cinéma, dans sa phase insurrectionnelle.
Aprés ces refus, définitivement en dehors des normes que vous aimez, le **CINEMA NUCLEAIRE** de **MARC,O.** intègre la salle et le spectateur dans la représentation cinématographique.
Désormais, le cinéma ne peut être que **NUCLEAIRE**.

Alors nous voulons dépasser ces dérisoires concours de sous-produits entre petits commerçants analphabètes ou destinés à le devenir. Notre seul présence ici les fait mourir.
Et voici les hommes d'un cinéma neuf: Serge **BERNA**, **G.E. DEBORD**, François **DUFRENE**, Monique **GEOFFROY**, Jean Isidore **ISOU**, Yolande du **LUART**, **MARC,O**, Gabriel **POMERAND, POUCETTE**, Gil J. **WOLMAN**" (Pamphlet found in the archive of the Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, Silkeborg, Denmark; see also the remark in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 205. Indicatively, the first statement of this tract reappears in the opening moments of Debord's *Hurlements*: compare *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 7 and Berreby, *Documents*, p. 295).

52. Guy Debord, "Prolégomènes à tout cinéma futur," *Ion* 1 (April 1952), p. 217; reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 109; a German translation by Ursula Panhans Bühler and Roberto Ohrt, "Prolegomena für jedes zukünftige Kino," can be found in *Durch* 3/4 (November 1987), p. 69.

53. Ibid.

54. Guy Debord, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1952): 16mm BW, sound, 80 min.; Production company: Films lettristes. The various scenarios of the film—which was dedicated to Gil J Wolman—were published in (a) *Ion* 1 (April 1952), pp. 219–30; reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 111–23 (this first version, with images, was never made); (b) *Les lèvres nues* 7 (December 1955), pp. 18–23; reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 293–98 (a new version without images preceded by a short descriptive text entitled "Grande fête de nuit"; German translation of the latter as "Eine große Nachtfete" in Debord, *Gegen den Film*, pp. 35–6); (c) Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, pp. 13–22 (a final version with sections not included in *Les lèvres nues*, followed by a short prose description [p. 9] and four short statements relating to the film [pp. 21–22]; German translation of the scenario in Debord, *Gegen den Film*, pp. 23–34); and (d) Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 5–14.

55. Although Isou claims that *Hurlements did* have an image track that was suppressed during the projection upon the suggestion of a sympathetic colleague (Isidore Isou, *Contre le cinéma situationniste, néo-nazi* [Paris: n. p. 1979], p. 24), in discussion with me Debord insisted that the first scenario was never more than a conceptual experiment and the second version *never* had an image track.

56. On the cowboy motif that reappears with astonishing regularity in Situationist and neo-Situationist productions well into the 1980s, see Greil Marcus, "The Cowboy Philosopher," *Artforum* 24 (March 1986), pp. 85–91.

57. Although Debord criticizes the notion of originality, he nevertheless resents the failure of film historians and critics to recognize the innovation of his cinema without images. Objecting to a description of himself in *France-Soir* of 8 March 1984 as an "extravagant writer and filmmaker," Debord notes: "Anyone else would have been credited with a bit of originality. Some filmmakers since have taken twenty or thirty years to move towards a cinema without images and one has praised their patience. To give another amusing example, the painter Yves Klein, whom I knew at the time and who was present at the first very tumultuous public projection of this film, was overwhelmed by a convincing black sequence lasting twenty-four minutes. Out of this experience he developed, a few years later, his 'monochrome' painting which, to tell the truth, wrapped in a bit of zen mysticism for his famous 'blue period,' was what provoked many an expert to call him a genius. Some still insist that he is one today. As far as painting is concerned, however, it is not I who could obscure Yves Klein's glory, but rather what Malévitch did much earlier and which was momentarily forgotten by these very same experts" (Debord, *Considérations*, pp. 45–46).

58. "Les arts futurs seront des bouleversements de situations, ou rien" (Debord, *Hurlements*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 8). The phrasing of this line, similar to many formulations in Breton's *L'amour fou*, is also reminiscent of the last line of *Nadja* that reads: "La beauté sera CONVULSIVE ou ne sera pas" (André Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, I [Paris: Gallimard, 1988], p. 753). As noted by Marguerite Bonnet, one of the editors of this Pléiade volume, this is a *revolutionary* syntax, as it is the very form employed by Thiers in his famous speech to the National Assembly on 13 November 1872: "La République sera conservatrice ou ne sera pas" (Ibid., p. 1,564).

59. Cf. *Les lèvres nues* 7 (December 1955), p. 18, footnote; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 294.

60. A few months later the same group also precluded a *Squelette sadique* in the same ciné-club that had been publicized and attributed to a certain René Guy Babord and that was to consist of turning out the lights in the hall for fifteen minutes (Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, p. 9).

61. Guy Atkins (with Troels Andersen), *Asger Jorn: The Crucial Years, 1954–1964* (New York: Wittenborn Art Books, 1977), pp. 57–59.

62. G.-E. Debord, "Encore un effort si vous voulez être situationnistes," *Potlatch* 29 (November 1957); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, p. 239; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 251. This passage is also quoted as the last of the four "explanations" following the scenario of *Hurlements* in Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, p. 22. In this issue of *Potlatch* it was announced that following the formation of the Situationist International as resolved by the Cosio d'Arroscia conference in July, the journal would heretofore appear under the auspices of the SI: consequently, *Potlatch* 29, the last issue of the journal, carries for the first and last time the subheading "Information Bulletin of the Situationist International."

63. Serge Berna, "Jusqu'à l'os," *Ion* 1 (April 1952), p. 187. After explaining that the second "chastity belt" is the financial dimension, Berna again calls for a reexamination of "the categorical imperative of cinema . . . which is—the image, the image, the image is what constitutes the cinema" (p. 188).

64. *Ion* 1 (April 1952), p. 196; the complete scenario of Dufrêne's work is contained in this issue, pp. 193–214.

65. Completed on 25 September 1951, it was first screened at the Ciné-Club d'Avant-Garde on 11 February 1952. The projection—onto a large meteorological balloon—caused an uproar and soon thereafter the film was officially censored (cf. *Potlatch* 12 [September 1954]; *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, p. 69; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 281). For Debord's polemical condemnation of the censorship of a film he praised as "more offensive today than Eisenstein's images which had been so threatening in Europe for such a long time," see "Totem et Tabou," *Internationale lettriste* 3 (August 1953), reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 156–57. The scenario of the film, first published in *Ion*, is reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 87–107. See also Wolman's "explanatory" text, "Le cinématochrone—nouvelle amplitude," first published in *Ur: La dictature lettriste* 2, no. 10; reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 141.

66. Compare the following description of a film attended by the narrator in Robert Desnos's *Nouvelles Hébrides*, written over 30 years earlier: "On the blank screen, a luminous disk was projected without any images of people or landscapes. The assembly of empty seats attentively followed some magnificent spectacle invisible to me" (Robert Desnos, *Nouvelles Hébrides et autres textes, 1922–1930*, ed. Marie-Claire Dumas [Paris: Gallimard, 1978], p. 100). The translation cited above is taken from an article by David Wills, "Slit Screen," *Dada/Surrealism* 15 (1986), p. 88. I am grateful to I. L. Bifidus for pointing out this striking similarity.

67. Isou, *Oeuvres de spectacle*, p. 87.

68. The generally negative accounts of the debut of the festival's "enfant terrible" in the press make no mention of images: see, for example, R. M. Arlaud's report in *Combat* (April 21–22), p. 2. Jean Cocteau describes the "Isou affair" on the Rue d'Antibes as follows: "Isidore Isou had invited us to *see* his film—a 9,000 meter spool—in the off-circuit of the festival. However, he had only finished the soundtrack. He considered his ideas sufficient to destroy the unstomachable cinema" (Jean Cocteau, *Entretiens autour du cinématographe* [Paris: Editions André Bonne, 1951], p. 90; English translation in Jean Cocteau, *Cocteau on the Film*, trans. Vera Traill [London: Dennis Dobson, 1954], p.135). Maurice Lemaître recounts more or less the same story: "As Isou and I had not finished the film in time, we projected only the *soundtrack*" (Maurice Lemaître, *Jean Cocteau et le lettrisme* [Paris: Centre de créativité, 1976], p. 2, note 3). In Isou's own account of the Cannes screening of *Traité*, the first "chapter," entitled "Le principe," *did* have an image track and it was only following this section that the audience was plunged into darkness due to the lack of images, which in turn caused the uproar (Isou, *Contre le cinéma situationniste, néo-nazi*, p. 24). During the ensuing commotion, Cocteau recounts, Isou had asked him to speak, but he had declined. However, Cocteau appends to the above description the text of the statement that he would have liked to have made on the occasion. Here he discusses the cleansing function of the void in Isou's work, citing as a proleptic comment an episode from the beginning of his own film *Orphée*, in which the journal *Nudisme* contains only blank pages: " 'This is ridiculous,' Orpheus says, to which the man from the Café des Poètes responds: 'Less ridiculous than if these pages were filled with ridiculous texts. No excess is ridiculous.' This is why I was content to say to the audience that an insolent attitude is always alive and that they would do well to take Isou's strange screening seriously" (Cocteau, *Entretiens autour du cinématographe*, p. 90).

69. Frame enlargements from the film depicting Isou and Lemaître can be found in *Une histoire du cinéma*, p. 144.

70. Isou, *Traité*, in *Oeuvres de spectacle*, p. 17.

71. As in the following passage from Isou's subsequent film, *Apologie d'un personnage unique* (Apology of a unique personality): "One day the cinema will be disgusted by its images, even when they have been *destroyed*. It will not dare present anything but *subtitles*. The film of tomorrow will be *lettrist* and composed of *subtitles*. If at its inception cinema was by virtue of its images an attack on *reading*, the day will come when the cinema will be a mere *form of reading*" (Isou, *Oeuvres de spectacle*, p. 269).

72. Isou, *Esthétique du cinéma*, in *Ion* 1 (April 1952), pp. 147–48.

73. Much to Isou's annoyance, years later, Debord simply integrates his suggested amplifications, without acknowledging their provenance. Compare Debord, *Hurlements*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 7. For Isou's protest, see his delirious polemic *Contre le cinéma situationniste, néo-nazi*, p. 25, footnote 1.

74. Debord, "Prolégomènes à tout cinéma futur," in *Ion* 1 (April 1952), p. 219; reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 109.

75. Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, p. 9.

76. In response to the question "Lettrism: A Neo-Dadaism?" Jean-Paul Curtay writes: "So if Lettrism, like Dada, came out of a reaction against a world war, Lettrism did not remain a protest . . . [but became] an exaltation of permanently renewed arts, philosophy, scientific knowledge, technology; a fight for a conversion of destructive powers and trends into constructive powers through original education, planning, administration, and banking systems [!]; a global positive move" (Jean-Paul Curtay, "Lettrism, Abstract Poetry, Mouth Symbols, and More...," *Dada/Surrealism* 12 ([1983], p. 72).

77. Conceived together with Picabia's ballet *Relâche* as an event that would challenge and outrage the spectators, *Entr'acte* took place in a theater adorned with large signs that read, "If you are not satisfied, go to hell" or "Whistles for sale at the door." The plan was that during the *entr'acte* (intermission) the sound track for the film would be provided by the traditional acoustics of intermission: small talk, coughing, drinking, and general murmur. Instead, the audience remained obediently seated and watched the film in silence, not even provoked by the film's dramatic violations of the conventions of cinematic narrative.

78. Thomas Elsaesser, "Dada/Cinema?" *Dada/Surrealism* 15 (1986), p. 20.

79. In the original, Benjamin's phrase reads "grundsätzliche Entwürdigung ihres Materials" (translation modified); Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit" (zweite Fassung), *Gesammelte Schriften*, II (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980), translated by Harry Zohn as "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 237.

80. As Raoul Vaneigem puts it in *The Revolution of Everyday Life*: "The more we contemplate, as spectators, the degradation of all values, the less likely we are to get on with a little real destruction" (p. 173).

81. It is important to distinguish the *cinematic* "dada" dimension of Debord's film from practices employed to similar ends that are in a strict sense *extra-cinematic*. Typical of the latter is Maurice Lemaître's project to educate film audiences in critical viewing by employing trained spectators to strategically interrupt the screenings of commercial films, a hilarious plan outlined in scrupulous detail in Lemaître's "Base d'une éducation cinématographique du public par la critique permanente," *Ur: La dictature lettriste* 2, pp. 19–20. Similarly one must make a distinction (purely descriptive, not normative) between Debord's reductive strategy and those adopted in Lemaître's film *Le film est déja commencé* (1951; 35mm, BW, hand-colored, sound, 60 min.; scenario published as *Le film est déja commencé? Séance de cinéma* [Paris: Editions André Bonne, 1952]). In this work, whose dada gesture is of the "happening" variety, "trained" spectators were to converse with the film, the screen was covered with cloth, the spectators were showered with water, and so on. A filmography of Lemaître's extensive cinematic production can be found in *Une histoire du cinéma*, p. 87; this volume also reproduces a (incorrectly identified) sequence from the film (p. 143).

82. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 30; "On ne conteste jamais réellement une organisation de l'existence sans contester toutes les formes de language qui appartiennent à cette organisation" (Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 22).

83. Guy Debord, "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Conditions of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Trend," in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 24 (translation of both title and citation modified); originally published as *Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendence situationniste internationale* (Paris, n. p., 1957), p. 16. This seminal text, an internal report published in Paris in June 1957 and presented to the members of the Lettrist International, the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, and the London Psychogeographical Society, served as the basis of discussion at the Cosio d'Arroscia conference where, on 27 July 1957, the Situationist International was founded. Largely unavailable for many years, the text has been reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 607–19, followed by an Italian version, pp. 621–37; it is also reprinted in facsimile in the pamphlet produced by the Centre Georges Pompidou to accompany the exhibit *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (Paris 1989).

84. A facsimile of the tract can be found in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 262.

85. Following the distribution of "Finis les pied plats" both the tract and the disavowal were reprinted in the first issue of *Internationale lettriste* under the title "Mort d'un commis voyageur" together with an introduction by Debord, an open letter by Berna, Brau, Debord, and Wolman to *Combat* (which refused publication) in response to the disavowal, and a letter by Brau admonishing Isou for his cowardice; this dossier is reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 146–51. See also the unsigned "Doyen des lettristes: Wolman a 24 ans," in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 281. Debord could hardly have been unaware of the overdetermination of attacking Chaplin given that the surrealists had explicitly endorsed Chaplin in their statement "Hands Off Love" signed by Breton, Aragon, Desnos, Leiris, and many others and published in *La revolution surréaliste* 9–10 (October 1927), pp. 1–6.

86. In this context the line from Debord's "Prolegomena"—"I made this film before it was too late"—takes on a new significance when it reappears in the sound track of the final version of *Hurlements* followed by the phrase "Jean-Isidore, to get out of that ephemeral crowd." It is tempting to read it along with Debord's renunciation of the explicit Lettrist vocabulary as a proleptic indication within the realm of the aesthetic of a multiply motivated alienation from the Lettrist program that would soon thereafter manifest itself decisively in the scission.

87. *Internationale lettriste* 1; reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 151.

88. Guy Debord, *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps*: 35mm BW, sound, 20 min.; produced by Dansk-Fransk Experimentalfilmskompagni; shot in April 1959, cut in September 1959. Scenario in Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, pp. 23–50 (followed by 12 stills); reprinted in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 15–35 (followed by six stills). An English translation (without shot descriptions, subtitles, text frame information, or images), "On the Passage of a Few Persons through a Rather Brief Period of Time," can be found in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 29–33. Another still image from the film is reproduced in *IS* 11 (October 1967), p. 36.

89. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 29; Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 19.

90. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 29 (translation modified); Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 17.

91. Technical notes on *Sur le passage* in Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, p. 3. This technical data is not included in either Debord's *Oeuvres cinématographiques* nor in the translations of the two scenarios in the Knabb *Anthology*.

92. "Le détournement comme négation et comme prélude," *IS* 3 (December 1959), p. 11.

93. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 215; Viénet, "Les situationnistes et les nouvelles formes d'action," p. 34. Viénet also calls for increased activity in the domains of (1) experimentation with photo-novels; (2) the promotion of guerilla tactics in the mass media; and (3) the perfection of Situationist comics. In his reference to the work by Marx that Eisenstein intended to film, Viénet most probably was thinking of the project to film *Das Kapital* for which there are a series of highly illuminating notes published in *Iskousstvo Kino* 1 (Moscow 1973). These notes from Eisenstein's work journal are also available in translation in both English and French: Sergei Eisenstein, "Notes for a Film of *Capital*," trans. Maciej Sliwowski, Jay Leyda, and Annette Michelson, *October* 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 3–26; Sergei Eisenstein, "Filmer le Capital," trans. Jean and Luda Schnitzer, *Ecran 74* 31 (December 1974). For contextualization and analysis, see, above all, Annette Michelson, "Reading Eisenstein Reading *Capital*," *October* 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 27–38, and *October* 3 (Spring 1977), pp. 82–89. Further material can be found in the following two articles: Barthélemy Amengual, "L'aventureux projet d'Eisenstein: Filmer *Le Capital*," *Vertigo* 2 (Paris) (November 1988), pp. 19–20; Raymonde Hébraud-Carasco, "Dialectique Einsenstein [*sic*]: 'Filmer le Capital,'" *Macula* 1 (1976), pp. 58–76.

94. Technical notes to *Sur le passage*, in Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, p. 3.

95. Guy-Ernest Debord, *Mémoires* (Paris: L'Internationale situationniste, 1959); Asger Jorn (conseiller technique pour le détournement G. E. Debord), *Fin de Copenhague* (Copenhagen: Permild & Rosengreen, 1957), published under the auspices of the Bauhaus imaginiste in a limited edition of 200 in May. *Fin de Copenhague* is reproduced in facsimile in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 553–92 and in a separate paperback facsimile edition published in 1985 by Editions Allia in Paris.

96. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 31 (translation slightly modified); Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p.26.

97. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 30 (translation modified); Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 21.

98. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 31 (translation slightly modified); Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 25.

99. One such text frame is reproduced as an illustration in Viénet, "Les situationnistes et les nouvelles formes d'action," p. 36.

100. Technical notes to Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Contre le cinéma*, p. 3.

101. Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 32–33 (translation modified); Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 30.

102. Cf. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 33; Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 30–31.

103. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 33 (translation modified); Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 31–32.

104. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 31 (translation modified); Debord, *Sur le passage*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 23–24.

105. To the extent that Debord's insistence on the documentation of incoherence is motivated by a utopian hope that once the confusion of the world is revealed it will provoke a long-overdue political and social change, it is not unlike the theory of radical distraction articulated by Siegfried Kracauer in the 1920s. Compare, for example, Kracauer's recognition of the redemptive and mimetic aspects of Weimar mass culture:

> In a profound sense, Berlin audiences act truthfully when increasingly they shun these art events (which, for good reason, remain caught in mere pretension), preferring instead the superficial glamor of the stars, films, revues and production values. Here, in pure externality, the audience encounters itself; its own reality is revealed in the fragmented sequence of splendid sense impressions. Were this reality to remain hidden from the audience, it could neither attack nor change it; its disclosure in the practice of distraction is therefore of *moral* significance.
>
> However, this is the case only if distraction is not an end in itself. Indeed the very fact that the shows which cater to distraction are composed of the same mixture of externalities as the world of the urban masses; the fact that these shows lack any authentic and materially motivated coherence, except possibly the cement [glue?] of sentimentality which covers up this lack but only in order to make it all the more visible; the fact that these shows convey in a precise and undisguised manner to thousands of eyes and ears the *disorder* of society—this is precisely what enables such shows to evoke and maintain that tension which must precede the inevitable radical change.

Siegfried Kracauer, "Cult of Distraction," trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987), pp. 94–95.

106. Gilles Ivain [Ivan Chtcheglov], "Formula for a New Urbanism," in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 4 (translation modified); "Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau," *IS* 1 (June 1958), p. 19.

107. Guy Debord, *Critique de la séparation*: 35mm BW, sound, 20 min.; shot in September–October 1960; cut during January–February 1961; produced by Dansk-Fransk Experimentalfilmskompagni. Scenario in Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, pp. 57–81 (followed by 12 stills); reprinted in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 37–58 (followed by six stills). An English translation (without shot descriptions, subtitles, text frame information, or images) can be found under the title "Critique of Separation," in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 34–37.

108. This print, part of the collection of the Silkeborg Kunstmuseum (Silkeborg, Denmark), belonged to Asger Jorn (who set up and largely bankrolled the Dansk-Fransk Experimentalfilmskompagni that financed both *Sur le passage* and *Critique de la séparation*). According to Troels Andersen, the curator of the museum, the 35mm print was given to the museum around 1960–1961 on the condition that it not be shown in public: "The reason for the latter decision was an ideological and artistic quarrel with some of the people involved" (Letter to the author dated 19 October 1987). It can, however, be screened for research purposes upon special request.

109. Not included in either Knabb's *Anthology* nor in Debord's *Oeuvres cinématographiques*. Text frames: "Bientôt, sur cet écran—Un des plus grands anti-films de tous les temps!—Des personnages vrais! Une histoire authentique!—Sur un thème comme le cinéma n'a jamais osé en traiter." Citation from André Martinet, *Eléments de linguistique générale* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970), p. 2: "Quand on songe combien il est naturel et avantageux pour l'homme d'identifier sa langue et la réalité, on devine quel degré de sophistication il lui a fallu atteindre pour les dissocier et faire de chacune un objet d'études" (Technical data on *Critique de la séparation* in Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, p. 10).

110. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 35 (translation modified); Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 42.

111. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 35 (translation modified); Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 42.

112. Compare, for example, the visual references to Robin Hood and Prince Valiant in Debord, *In Girum*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 204 and 245. In the latter case, a comic strip image depicting "Prince Valiant, in search of adventures" alternates with a photograph of Ivan Chtcheglov.

113. Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 35–36 (translation modified); Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 45.

114. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 34; Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 39–40.

115. In this regard Debord's films are very reminiscent of the montage aesthetic articulated by Theodor W. Adorno and Hanns Eisler in their study of sound-image relations in cinema, *Komposition für den Film* (Munich: Rogner und Bernhard, 1969 and Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976). For details of the complicated publication history of this seminal study, as well as the status of the English-language edition signed by Hanns Eisler, *Composing for the Films* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), cf. the editorial pre- and postfaces in the two German editions cited above.

116. Technical notes to *Critique de la séparation*, in Debord, *Contre le cinéma*, p. 10.

117. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 37 (translation modified); Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 50.

118. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 37; Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 49.

119. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 310; "Une modification révolutionnaire des formes présentes de la culture ne peut être rien d'autre que le dépassement de tous les aspects de l'instrumentation esthétique et technique qui constitue un ensemble de spectacles séparés de la vie. Ce n'est pas dans ces significations de surface que l'on doit chercher la relation d'un spectacle avec les problèmes de la société, mais au niveau le plus profond, au niveau de *sa fonction en tant que spectacle*" (Debord, "Pour un jugement révolutionnaire de l'art," p. 13).

120. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 37; Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 52–53.

121. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 25; Debord, *Rapport sur la construction des situations*, p. 17; reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 618. The passage cited above is also employed as an epigraph for one of the first essays in the first issue of *IS* (June 1958), "Problèmes préliminaires à la construction d'une situation," p. 11; compare Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 43.

122. Not included in Knabb, *Anthology*; Debord, *Critique de la séparation*, in *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 52–53. "Les Mystères de New York" was a series of 600-meter silent film episodes (twenty-two in all) made by Louis Gasnier in 1915 under the title "The Clutching Hand/Exploits of Elaine" and starring Pearl White. It was based on a serial novel by Pierre Decourcelle that was published in *Le Matin*. Louis Aragon pays an ironic homage to the film in *Anicet ou le panorama* (Paris: NRF, 1921).

123. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 310 (translation modified); Debord, "Pour un jugement révolutionnaire de l'art," p. 141.

124. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 298; "Le cinéma et la révolution," *IS* 12 (September 1969), p. 105.

125. *La société du spectacle* (1973), 35mm BW, sound, approximately 80 min.; produced by Simar Films (Paris); scenario in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 59–144, followed by twenty stills.

126. *La véritable scission dans l'Internationale* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972).

127. Publicity brochure for *La société du spectacle* produced by Simar Films (Paris) in 1973.

128. "Que la tentative révolutionnaire de mai 1968 ait marqué le changement d'une époque, voilà ce que démontre le simple fait qu'un livre de théorie subversive comme *La société du spectacle* de Guy Debord puisse être aujourd'hui porté à l'écran par son auteur lui-même, et qu'il existe un producteur pour financer une telle entreprise."

129. As evidenced in the following passage from the contract signed with Simar, Debord's total creative freedom was stipulated in writing: "It is agreed that the author will have complete liberty in the accomplishment of his work, without supervision from anyone, and without even any obligation to take into consideration any comments whatsoever on any aspect of the content or of the cinematic form that he deems appropriate for his film"; "Il est entendu que l'auteur accomplira son travail en toute liberté, sans contrôle de qui que ce soit, et

sans même tenir compte de quelque observation que ce soit sur aucun aspect du contenu ni de la forme cinématographique qu'il lui paraîtra convenable de donner à son film" (Contract between Simar Films and Guy Debord, cited in publicity pamphlet for the film *La société du spectacle* [1973]).

130. In conversation with the author, April 1989 (Paris). The film employs all or part of the following theses in the order listed: 1–4, 6–7, 9–10, 12, 16, 18, 21–24, 29, 31, 33–34; 204–9; 187–88; 195; 35–37, 41, 44, 46, 48, 50, 54–56; 59–60, 63–66, 69–72; 166–69, 171, 173, 178; 147–48, 150, 153, 155–58, 162; 134, 133, 141, 145–46; 75–77, 85–86, 88, 90, 100, 104, 106–7, 114–15, 122–24.

131. August von Cieszkowski, *Prolégomènes à l'historiosophie* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1973), p. 102; cited in *La société du spectacle*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 75.

132. *La société du spectacle* (Thesis 204), in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 70.

133. "Sa prèsente adaptation cinématographique, elle aussi, ne se propose pas quelques critiques politiques partielles, mais une critique totale du monde existant, c'est-à-dire de tous les aspects du capitalisme moderne, et de son système général d'illusions" (Publicity brochure for *La société du spectacle*).

134. *La société du spectacle* (Thesis 208), in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 72.

135. In the methodological preface to this unfinished project, Benjamin writes that the practice of citation without quotation marks, which he identifies with a strategy of montage, is one of the aims of the work: "Diese Arbeit muß die Kunst, ohne Anfuhrungszeichen zu zitieren, zur höchsten Höhe entwickeln. Ihre Theorie hängt aufs engste mit der Montage zusammen" (Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagenwerk*, I [Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985], p. 572 [Thesis N 1, 9]).

136. Ibid.

137. *"Communiqué*: Quand la pensée me vint de créer le monde, je prévis qu'on y tournerait un jour un film aussi révoltant que *La Société du Spectacle*. De sorte que j'ai préféré ne pas créer le monde. (signé): Dieu" (Text provided from private archive).

138. Reviews of the film *La société du spectacle: Art Press* 50 (Summer 1981); *Charlie-Hebdo* 181 (6 May 1974), p. 15 (D. D. T.) and a reader's letter in *Charlie-Hebdo* 182 (13 May 1974), p. 11; *Cinéma 74* 188 (June 1974), pp. 146–47 (Bernard Pauly); *Le Monde* (9 May 1974), p. 20 (François Bott); *Le Point* 87 (21 May 1974), p. 19; *Nouvel observateur* 494 (29 April 1974), p. 62 (Claude Roy); *Nouvel observateur* 496 (13 May 1974), p. 28; *Quotidien de Paris* 24 (2 May 1974), p. 9; *Téléciné* 189 (June 1974), p. 24 (S. L. P.); *Télérama* 1,269 (11 May 1974), p. 73 (Alain Remond); *Zoom* 22 (Jan–Feb 1974), pp. 27 and 29 (J. F.).

139. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 209.

140. "How Not to Understand Situationist Books," (excerpts) in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 265–69 (translation of title modified); "Comment on ne comprend pas des livres situationnistes," *IS* 12 (September 1969), pp. 44–54. It is precisely this practice of symptomatic citation of critical responses that Knabb also employs in an appendix entitled "The Blind Men and the Elephant (Selected Opinions on the Situationists)" (*Anthology*, pp. 381–92).

141. The citations are taken from reviews in *Edmagramme* (6 December 1967), *Le Nouvel observateur* (3 January 1968; 8 November 1971; 22 May 1972), *La quinzaine littéraire* (1 February 1968), *La gazette littéraire de Lausanne* (13 January 1968), *Réforme* (9 March 1968), *Le Monde* (14 February 1968), *The Times Literary Supplement* (21 March 1968), *New York Times* (21 April 1968), *The Sunday Times* (21 July 1968), *L'Espresso* (15 December 1968), *Umanità nuova* (15 May 1971), *Les temps modernes* 299–300 (June 1971), *Etudes* (June–December 1968).

142. *Réfutation de tous les jugements, tant élogieux qu'hostiles, qui ont été jusqu'ici portés sur le film "La Société du Spectacle"* (1975), 35mm BW, sound, 30 min.; produced by Simar Films (Paris); scenario in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 155–85, followed by six stills.

143. Bertolt Brecht, "Der Dreigroschenprozeß. Ein soziologisches Experiment" in his *Gesammelte Werke* XVIII (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1967), pp. 139–209. A French translation of this remarkable document can be found in the volume of Brecht's writings entitled *Sur le cinéma* (Paris: L'Arche, 1976).

144. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 312; "La critique d'art est un spectacle au deuxième degré. Le critique est celui qui donne en spectacle son état de spectateur même. Spectateur spécialisé, donc spectateur idéal, énonçant ses idées et sentiments *devant* une oeuvre à laquelle il ne participe pas réellement. Il relance, remet en scène, sa propre non-intervention sur le spectacle. La faiblesse des

jugements fragmentaires, hasardeux et largement arbitraires, sur des jugements fragmentaires, hasardeux et largement arbitraires, sur des spectacles qui ne nous concernent pas vraiment est notre lot à tous dans beaucoup de discussions banales de la vie privée. Mais le critique d'art fait étalage d'une telle faiblesse, *rendue exemplaire*" (Debord, "Pour un jugement révolutionnaire de l'art," p. 15).

145. *Réfutation*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 166–67.

146. *Réfutation*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 157.

147. *Réfutation*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 162.

148. *Réfutation*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 159 and 166.

149. *Réfutation*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 174.

150. *Réfutation*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 169.

151. "Communication prioritaire," *IS* 7 (April 1962), p.24.

152. Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 312; Debord, "Pour un jugement révolutionnaire de l'art," p. 15.

153. *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni* (1978); 35mm BW, sound; approximately 80 min.; produced by Simar Films. Scenario in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 187–278, followed by twenty-four black and white stills (pp. 278ff.). A selection of passages from the film translated into English and introduced by Lucy Forsyth, together with shot illustrations (some cropped, others upside-down) from four of Debord's films, can be found under the title "In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni," in *Block* 14 (Autumn 1988), pp. 27–37. A complete translation has been announced as forthcoming from Chronos Publications (London). A German translation of the scenario is available as *Wir irren des nachts im Kreis umber und werden vom Feuer verzehrt* (Berlin: Edition Tiamat, 1985).

154. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 189.

155. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 204.

156. To those who might rightly object to the problematic model of ideology as false consciousness employed here, one should point out that such a critique, while theoretically sound, would do well to attempt to take account of the specificity of the site of the enunciation: the cinema.

157. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 202.

158. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 208.

159. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, pp. 207–8.

160. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 217.

161. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 223.

162. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 225. [This aphorism, which intrigued Nietzsche, was the motto of an eleventh-century Islamic Shiite sect located in northern Iran, the Nizārī Ismā'īlīyah. More commonly known as the Assassins (Arabic, *hashīshīyah*, "users of hashish," from which the English word *assassin* comes), the sect and its leader, Hassan-i Sabbāh, were mythologized in Western accounts starting with Marco Polo in the thirteenth century. Revolting against the rule of the Seljuk dynasty, which was Turkish in origin and militantly Sūnni in character, Sabbāh seized a fortress in the Elburz mountains and sent forth his followers to assassinate the ruling "infidels"; reportedly using both hashish and promises of the attainment of paradise (if a follower was "martyred" while attacking) to motivate his men, Sabbāh relied upon the spectacularity of these assassinations to overcome the overwhelming military superiority of his enemies. For the sect's legend and its transmission in the West, see Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967)—ED.]

163. The continued capacity of the absence of any image to dumbfound spectators is confirmed by a critic who describes how, during this sequence, someone in the audience was in the process of going out to complain but then the image reappeared and they returned to their seat (Dominique Païni in *Cinéma 81* 271–272 [July/August 1981]).

164. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 256. Elsewhere Debord characterizes the same group as one in which "everybody consumed more glasses of wine daily than the number of lies told by a union leader during the entire duration of a wildcat strike" (p. 232).

165. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 235.

166. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 252.

167. For more information on "The Game of War," see the rulebook published by the Société des jeux stratégiques et historiques (Paris 1977). Together with Alice Becker-Ho, Debord has published a detailed record of one "game" under

the title *Le jeu de la guerre: Relevé des positions successives de toutes les forces au cours d'une partie* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1987).

168. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 215.

169. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 265.

170. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 265.

171. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 264.

172. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 262.

173. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 278.

174. *In Girum*, in Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques*, p. 237–38.

175. As announced in an extended article on the film in *Libération* (3 June 1981), there was a screening of *In Girum* at 4 A.M. on the pirate television station "Canal 68" on 4 June 1981.

176. *Ordures et décombres déballés à la sortie du film "in girum imus nocte et consumimur igni"* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1982). There are at least two further reviews of the film not included in this volume: the first, by Régis Jauffret, was published in *Art Press* 50 (Summer 1981), p. 34; the second, an extended, sympathetic, and quite informed treatment by Lucien Logette, appeared in *Jeune cinéma* 137 (September–October 1981), pp. 23–25.

177. In *Potlatch* 15 ([December 1954]; *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, p. 91; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 192) the journal announces the completion of the first LI experiment in radio propaganda, a piece entitled "La valeur éducative" (The educational value). This "unusual" tape, offered to any radio station willing to take the risk of playing it, was composed *entirely* of detourned phrases taken from Bossuet, Demangeon and Meynier, an article in *France-Soir*, Marx and Engels, Saint-Just, and from the books of Jeremiah, Psalms, and Samuel. The text of the program was then published in its entirety in the subsequent issues of the journal: *Potlatch* 16 ([January 1955]; *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, pp. 100–102; also in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 195–96); *Potlatch* 17 ([February 1955]; *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, pp. 112–13; Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 199–200); *Potlatch* 18 ([March 1955]; *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, pp. 121–23; also in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 203–4). It is signed Guy-Ernest Debord.

178. *Potlatch* 15 (December 1954); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, p. 91; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 192.

179. *Potlatch* 21 (June 1955); *Potlatch, 1954–1957*, p. 147; also in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 215.

180. *IS* 5 (December 1960), p. 11.

181. This fact, in turn, renders all the more curious (or perhaps symptomatic?) the virtually total lack of any reference to the films by Debord and the Lettrists in the secondary literature on the postwar experimental cinema. This striking absence is manifest not only in the already "classical" English-language accounts of the "international free cinema" by David Curtis, Stephen Dwoskin, P. Adam Sitney, and Parker Tyler, but even in more recent and specialized studies such as Peter Gidal's *Materialist Film* (London: Routledge, 1989).

182. It would be interesting to explore the connections between the "theory film" genre and other cinematic works that explicitly acknowledge their indebtedness to the SI such as Dusan Makavejev's *Sweet Movie* (dedicated to Raoul Vaneigem) and Godfrey Reggio's *La Prophétie* (dedicated to Debord).

183. Peter Wollen, "Counter Cinema: *Vent D'Est*," *Afterimage* 4 (Autumn 1972), pp. 6–16.

184. My treatment of the question of "political modernism" has benefited greatly from David Rodowick's impressive discussion of 1970s film theory in his recent study *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), esp. chapter two: "Modernism and Semiology," pp. 42–66.

185. Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), pp. 69–70.

186. "Il me semble qu'ici mon travail, très court mais étendu sur une période de vingt-six ans, a bien correspondu aux principaux critères de l'art moderne: (1) l'originalité fortement marquée au départ et la décision ferme de ne jamais faire 'la même chose' deux fois successivement, tout en ayant un style et une thématique personnelle toujours reconnaissables; (2) comprendre la société de son temps, *id est* l'expliquer en la critiquant, car il s'agissait manifestement d'un temps qui manquait davantage de critique que d'apologétique; (3) enfin, avoir été révolutionnaire *dans la forme et dans le contenu*, ce qui me paraît aller dans le sens de toutes les aspirations "unitaires" de l'art moderne, vers ce point où il a voulu aller au delà de l'art" (Guy Debord, letter to the author dated 24 April 1989).

GUY DEBORD'S MÉMOIRES: A Situationist Primer

Greil Marcus

Devant l'œuvre d'un jeune cinéaste, les réticences les plus étranges sont de mise
Je ne m'arrêterai cette fois qu'à la bande sonore qui est bouleversante dans toute l'acception du terme
Je crois que nous ne nous reverrons jamais
Près d'un baiser les lumières des rues de l'hiver finiront
(Fin de l'improvisation lettriste)
Après toute les réponse à contretemps, et la jeunesse qui se fait vieille, la nuit retombe de bien haut
Ecran noir
Guy-Ernest Debord
Je dévidai toutes les bobines de la cinémathèque et les jetai

Full of discord and dread

The great affair of this night, for all the nights and all the days to come, will assure us complete sovereignty over an absolute empire

We'll evoke the situation through secondary details

All the elements of the American mystery novel can be found here, violence, sexuality, cruelty, but the scene

Truth, as it's called, I don't recognize it, I forget it, I don't see it, I have no idea what it is

The imaginary version of myself, who invents illusions of grandeur, of power, to hide his terrors, his dependencies

—When I decided to marry Daniel Gélin, Sylvie said again, Christian Dior called me and questioned me at length, asking about Daniel and me. He wanted me to be happy . . .

Every epoch aspires to a more beautiful world. The more confused and somber the present, the more profound is this desire. At the end of the Middle Ages, life was filled with a dark melancholy . . . In the 15th century, one can say, it was neither the style nor good form to openly praise life. It was proper only to speak of suffering and despair. The world was approaching its end and all earthly things were corrupted. . . .
—Huizinga, The Decline of the Middle Ages

to communicate and discuss

we grow older

has everything been said?

it's too late

the passion to speak and remember rests on a material base

let no one claim I have nothing new to say; the arrangement of materials is new

the epoch itself is the frame of the whole work

Ours is a singular profession: enormous labor, fatigue beyond words, never respite, a destiny on the fringes of that of others

At the beginning, I was nothing. At my side, neither the shadow of power nor of any organization. In France, no response and no notoriety. Elsewhere, no credit or justification.

Where will we meet each other tomorrow?

I wanted to speak the beautiful language of my time

These are a few fragments from Guy Debord's *Mémoires*, a book published in early 1959, but prepared in late 1957, when Debord was turning twenty-six: a book, the title page announced, "composed entirely of prefabricated elements." *Mémoires* is all fragments: hundreds of snippets of text from travel literature, poems, histories, novels, tracts on political economy, film scripts, newspapers, magazines, sociological treatises, plus whole or partial photographs, cartoons, comic strips, maps, building plans, advertisements, old etchings and woodcuts, all overlaid by colored lines, patterns, and splotches painted by Asger Jorn. Refusing the valorization of original speech, the book nevertheless seems to speak with a unique and unknown tongue; insisting on the dissolution of verbal and visible languages—on the breakdown of all social codes, on the impossibility of completing a sentence or a thought—the book contains nothing random. In the combinations of its found, scavenged, or stolen materials, *Mémoires* affirms that everything needed to say whatever one might want to say is already present, accessible to anyone; the book defines a project, and tells a story.

The project is the Situationist project, formally launched in July 1957 with the foundation of the Situationist International (SI): the wish to "multiply poetic subjects and objects" and "to organize games of these poetic objects among these poetic subjects" (Guy Debord, *Rapport sur la construction des situations*, May 1957). It is the project of revisioning the world according to its smallest, most prosaic, everyday details and artifacts, then remaking the world on those same terms—a project, the SI tried to prove over the next decade, that implied a new critique of social life and the necessity of a new kind of social revolution.

If the project defined in *Mémoires* was about the future, the story it told was about the past. It was the story of the first two years of the Lettrist International (LI), Debord's tiny pre-Situationist group, active in Paris from 1952 to 1957, in whose Saint-Germain-des-Prés milieu the project was first discovered and described ("The art of the future will be the overthrow of situations, or nothing!"—Debord, *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*, 1952).

Although Debord constructed his book from unnamed sources—save for the epigraphs introducing its three chapters, not a line or a picture, not even the quotes from or the pictures of Debord and other members of the LI, carries an attribution or an identifying word—the book has its own voice: the voice of romantic, heroic, questing, dissipated, reflective, melodramatic, even schoolboy adventure. No matter how empty the world may seem, the voice says, no matter how degraded and used up the world appears to be, anything is possible.

Mémoires might be said to be about the slow, haphazard, determined discovery of this voice, and the discovery of what it is worth; if the story is fragmented and the project abstract, so was the adventure. Revolving around a core of former or would-be artists in their teens and twenties (most of them French but also, in given moments, Algerians, a Canadian, a Scot, a Russian), the members of the LI banned both art and work among themselves: creation was the meaning of life but art had to be lived, they said (as Bohemian intellectuals had been saying for a century), and the temptations of what they called the "Old World" had to be escaped, to be negated in the performance of an exemplary new life. The few young men and women who in any one year lived up to the group's rules were always more than matched by those who didn't: backsliders were ruthlessly expelled, and as *Mémoires* happily quotes Long John Silver's song from *Treasure Island,* " 'Drink and the devil took care of the rest.' " The greatest risk in joining the group, in becoming part of what it called its "new civilization," was that of being ex-

cluded from it; because the members of the LI believed they were living out a prophecy of the future, a whole new world, that risk was not trivial. Within the LI, to be banished was to be dead, or worse: to have never existed at all.

And yet absent work and art, what the LI was about, what it was for, was that game of poetic objects and subjects; the LI was about play, and *Mémoires* is playful before it is anything else, a celebration of what Asger Jorn once called "experiences without purpose, devoid of meaning." " 'I have founded my cause on nothing,' " Jorn quoted the anarchist theorist Max Stirner, and Jorn went on: "To found one's cause on nothing means that one establishes a cause without cause—which is to say to overthrow the ancient order of cause and effect, and to establish effect, the pure act, as the origin of all causes" (*Pour la forme*, 1958). It's the puerility and the allure of that sort of happy nihilism one feels as one picks through the first pages of *Mémoires*, with their severed, fractional episodes of (as promised) sex, violence, and cruelty—and madness—eruptions of desire countered by words of fear and philosophical despair; a few pages on, the book feels like a drunken sprawl through the encyclopedia of common knowledge.

But out of the chaos of one page comes the quiet of others. There is the two-page spread whose only text is "POPULATION AND GREAT ECONOMIC QUESTIONS," its illustrations merely fourteen dull sketches of nineteenth century European soldiers dressed for foreign lands: a modest argument that, in the Old World, all social questions are really military questions, or rather questions of imperialism, which is to say that, in the middle of the twentieth century, with empires collapsing, imperialism has turned back on its source, the home country, which must now be administered as the last colony. It's a verbal-visual pun as simple in form as it is complex in meaning, and *Mémoires* is filled with its like. This is a peculiar discourse, and easy to miss—the way, for example, the words and pictures that tell the story of the search for the new civilization are printed legibly, while the cuttings that speak only for the Old World (the tale of the model Sylvie and Christian Dior, for one) are almost always smeared, collapsed, blankly shouting in broken characters and twisted type, as if self-destructing. Soon enough, after one has glanced through the fifty-odd pages of *Mémoires*, after one has all but given up on reading this pointedly unreadable book, the book begs to be deciphered.

For that two keys are needed, the LI terms *détournement* and *dérive*—concepts of critique and transformation in the LI, then carried into the SI as weapons of demolition and revolution. *Détournement* (literally, "diversion," with connotations of criminality and delinquency) meant the theft of aesthetic artifacts from the Old World and their revitalization in contexts of one's own devising ("Any sign is susceptible to conversion into something else, even its opposite," Debord and LI member Gil J Wolman wrote in 1956 in their essay "Mode d'emploi du détournement"): for the LI, *détournement* was to replace art. The *dérive* (literally, "drift," in the nautical sense) was a matter of opening one's consciousness to the (so to speak) unconsciousness of urban space; the *dérive* meant a solo or collective passage down city streets, a surrender to and then pursuit of alleys of attraction, boulevards of repulsion, until the city itself became a field of what the LI called "psychogeography," where every building, route, and decoration expanded with meaning or disappeared for the lack of it: for the LI, the *dérive* ("the CONTINUOUS *DÉRIVE*," LI member Ivan Chtcheglov said in 1953) was to replace work. What the group meant to practice, Debord said in 1959, looking back, was "a role of pure consumption"—the total consumption of all the images and words of the past, the total consumption of the group's surroundings, and ultimately the total consumption "of its time" (*Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps*).

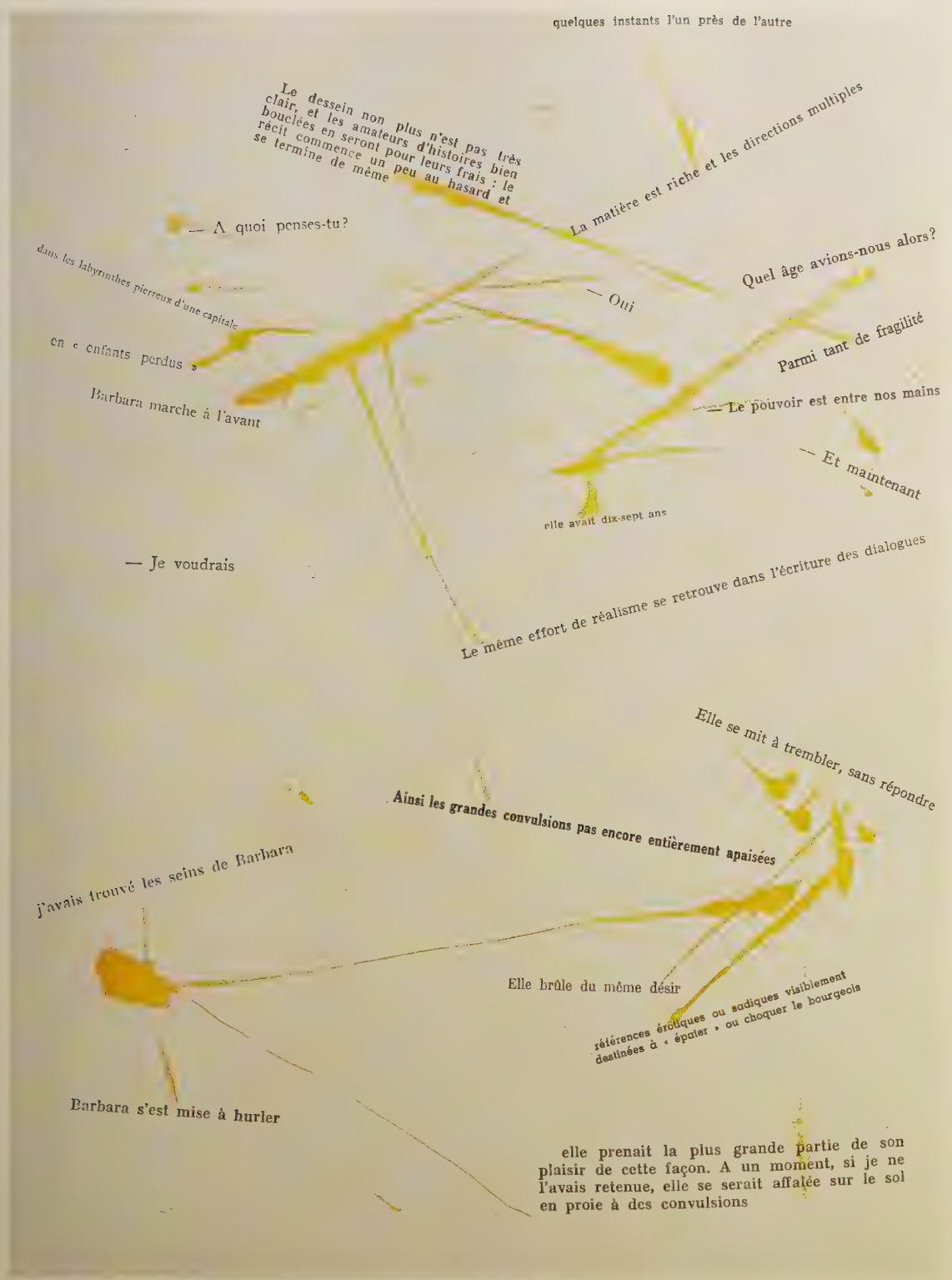
Earlier in 1957, just before the founding of the SI, seven months before Debord made *Mémoires*, Debord and Jorn collaborated on another collage book: *Fin de Copenhague* (which appeared under Jorn's name, with Debord credited as "counselor for *détournement*"). Published in an Old World/art world edition of two hundred copies (there were more of *Mémoires*, though it's unclear how many more—over a thousand, it would seem), *Fin de Copenhague* is a satire of advertising and city planning, free of mystery or ambiguity. There is no project, only a funny, lively nay-saying, and the book tells no story; it's most notable for Jorn's claim that it was conceived, cut up, pasted, painted, and printed in forty-eight hours (or twenty-four hours), following a single visit to a single newsstand. *Mémoires* is far more crepuscular and far richer: not merely a scattered record of the LI's use of *détournement* and the *dérive*, but a version of both.

Look closely and Jorn's seemingly blind strips of color turn into avenues, then Debord's words and pictures change Jorn's avenues into labyrinths: *Mémoires* becomes a drift from a word to its picture. A connection is made, a connection is missed, the reader is lost, the reader enters another passageway, then another; in the book's most intense moments, turning a page is like waking from a dream or falling into one. Maps of Paris change into maps of London, then into charts of prisons, then into streets that have yet to be laid out. A line on a busy page near the end of *Mémoires* seals the game: "Here's where all the tangled routes meet!"

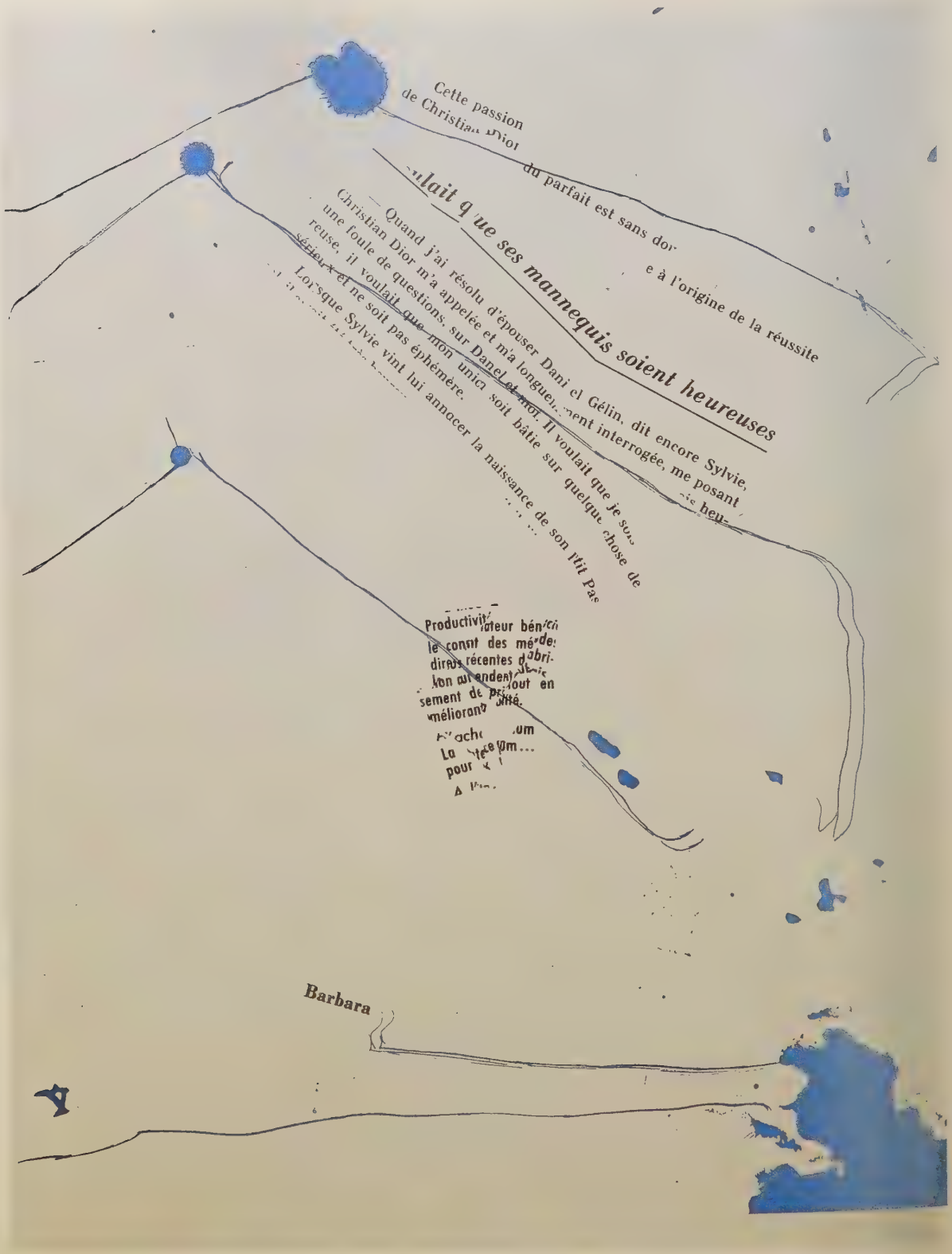
Mémoires is divided into three parts. There is "June 1952," when *Hurlements en faveur de Sade*, Debord's first film, was premiered, and he and Wolman first conceived the "Lettrist International" as a secret tendency within Isidore Isou's Lettrist movement, the postwar Parisian neo-dada band Debord and Wolman were then part of; "December 1952," when the LI, having announced itself in late October with leaflets denouncing a Charlie Chaplin press conference at the Ritz, formally established itself, laying down its statutes (taking goals for granted and, like the authors of the Constitution of the United States, concentrating on prohibitions and penalities); and "September 1953," when the group first began to come apart ("The dirt is gone!" announces a loud page in *Mémoires*, the phrase, taken from an ad for a detergent, signifying that the LI had purified itself of microbes and viruses, of frauds and careerists).

This is the story. For all of its ephemerality, its embrace of shadow-play (though the SI proclaimed itself, in June 1958, in the first number of its journal *Internationale situationniste*, to be an assemblage of intellectual terrorists on the verge of changing the world, in its time and for that matter ever after, the LI was a group known mostly to itself), the story in *Mémoires* is immediately compelling, full of hazard and loss, an odd tone of painful nostalgia anticipating the results of any day's adventures. "Oblivion is our ruling passion," Jorn quoted Debord on the *dérive* in 1953 (*Pour la forme*); *Mémoires* is about the sense that along with the struggle to change the world, to make or find a new civilization, comes the conviction that one will fail those hopes, that the true struggle will be to remember what, once, one meant to do.

"Lights, shadows, figures," "Do I remember you? Yes, I want," "Our talk is full of booze"—lightly scored by Jorn in yellow, these are three of the nine lines on the first collage page of *Mémoires*. Throughout this first section—which ends with two crowded pages on the premiere of *Hurlements* (fig. 7.5) ("Who has made, in so few images, a more beautiful poem of silence?"—*Hurlements* contained no images, only a white screen when the sound track carried dialogue and a black screen when the sound track was dead, which was more than sixty


quelques instants l'un près de l'autre
Le dessein non plus n'est pas très clair, et les amateurs d'histoires bien bouclées en seront pour leurs frais : le récit commence un peu au hasard et se termine de même
La matière est riche et les directions multiples
— A quoi penses-tu?
dans les labyrinthes pierreux d'une capitale
— Oui
Quel âge avions-nous alors?
en « enfants perdus »
Parmi tant de fragilité
Barbara marche à l'avant
— Le pouvoir est entre nos mains
— Et maintenant
elle avait dix-sept ans
— Je voudrais
Le même effort de réalisme se retrouve dans l'écriture des dialogues
Elle se mit à trembler, sans répondre
Ainsi les grandes convulsions pas encore entièrement apaisées
j'avais trouvé les seins de Barbara
Elle brûle du même désir
références érotiques ou sadiques visiblement destinées à « épater » ou choquer le bourgeois
Barbara s'est mise à hurler
elle prenait la plus grande partie de son plaisir de cette façon. A un moment, si je ne l'avais retenue, elle se serait affalée sur le sol en proie à des convulsions

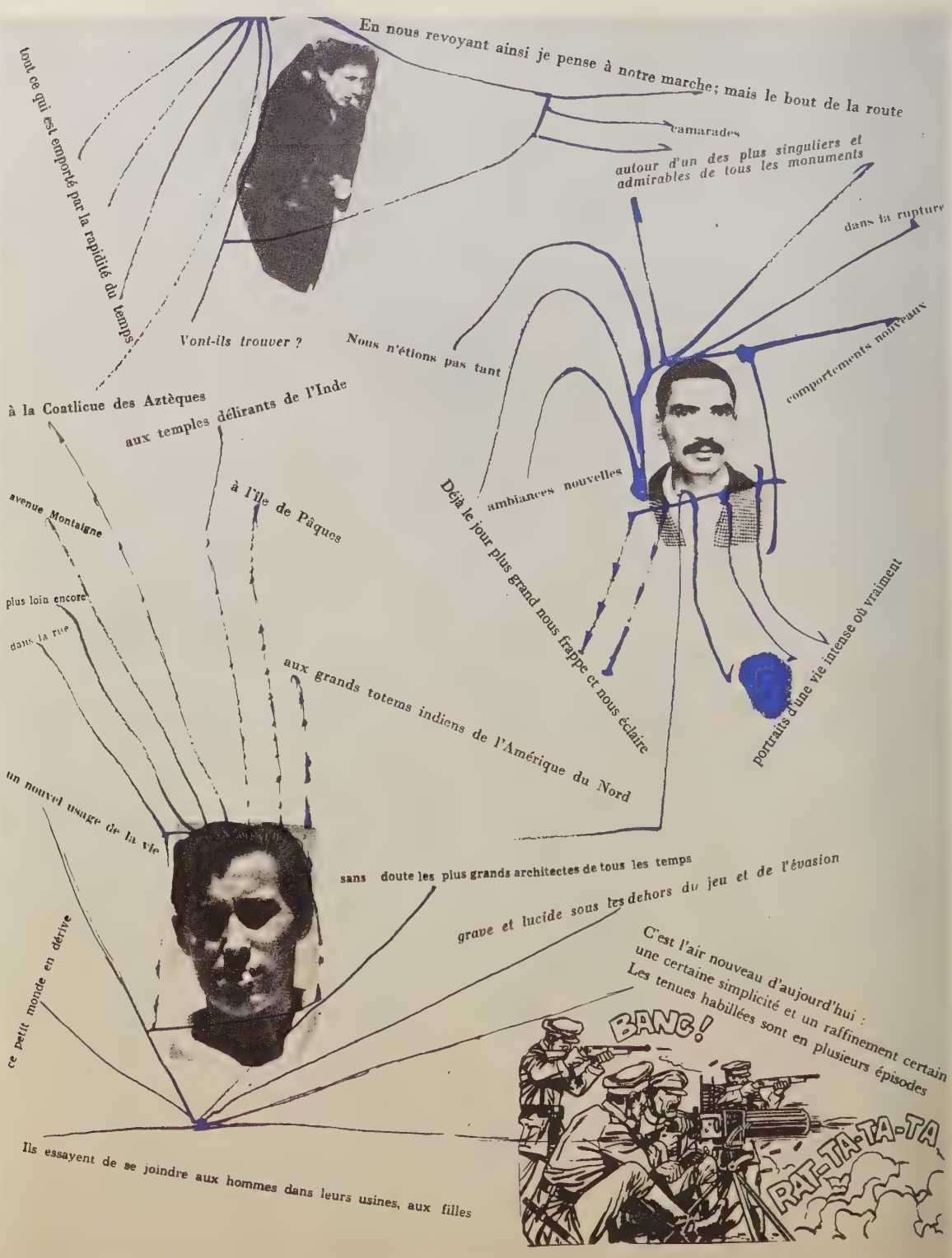
7.1
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959


Cette passion
de Christian Dior
du parfait est sans dor
e à l'origine de la réussite
ulait que ses mannequis soient heureuses
Quand j'ai résolu d'épouser Dani el Gélin, dit encore Sylvie,
Christian Dior m'a appelée et m'a longuement interrogée, me posant
une foule de questions, sur Daniel et moi. Il voulait que je sois
reuse, il voulait que mon unici soit bâtie sur quelque chose de
sérieux et ne soit pas éphémère.
Lorsque Sylvie vint lui annoncer la naissance de son fils Pas
Barbara

7.2
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959

— the Paris of the young men and girls
who haunt the
Bank
Ils ne sont pas pour eux-mêmes; ils sont neutres, indifférents, suspendus à tout, sans s'excepte
la seule succession des heures,
des jours, sur le décor inchangé
Ils jouent souvent à ce jeu, car ils
le thème spa
un tableau équivoque de
la nuit et la neige
am
tableau de cette société asphyxiée qui est la nôtre

7.3
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959


En nous revoyant ainsi je pense à notre marche; mais le bout de la route
camarades
autour d'un des plus singuliers et admirables de tous les monuments
dans la rupture
tout ce qui est emporté par la rapidité du temps
Vont-ils trouver ?
Nous n'étions pas tant
comportements nouveaux
à la Coatlicue des Aztèques
aux temples délirants de l'Inde
à l'île de Pâques
ambiances nouvelles
Déjà le jour plus grand nous frappe et nous éclaire
avenue Montaigne
plus loin encore
dans la rue
portraits d'une vie intense où vraiment
aux grands totems indiens de l'Amérique du Nord
un nouvel usage de la vie
sans doute les plus grands architectes de tous les temps
grave et lucide sous tes dehors du jeu et de l'évasion
C'est l'air nouveau d'aujourd'hui :
une certaine simplicité et un raffinement certain
Les tenues habillées sont en plusieurs épisodes
ce petit monde en dérive
BANG!
RAT-TA-TA-TA
Ils essayent de se joindre aux hommes dans leurs usines, aux filles

7.4
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959

Devant l'œuvre d'un jeune cinéaste, les réticences les plus étranges sont de mise
Je crois que nous ne nous reverrons jamais
Près d'un baiser les lumières des rues de l'hiver fniront
(Fin de l'improvisation lettriste)
Après toutes les réponse à contre-temps, et la jeunesse qui se fait vieille, la nuit retombe de bien haut
Ecran noir
Guy-Ernest Debord
Qui a fait, en si peu d'images, un plus beau poème de la solitude?
Je dévalai toutes les bobines de la cinémathèque et les jetai
HURLEMENTS EN FAVEUR DE
CINE-CLUB : Vous assistez à la projection du dernier film paru
Les arts futurs seront des bouleversements de situations, ou rien

7.5
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959

minutes out of the film's total of eighty; "one hears the shrill cries of decent women and the slanders of the men," the orchestration went on, " 'bastards,' 'shits,' 'tricksters,' 'assassins,' 'butchers' resonate")—there is a dramatization of confusion and separation, of various people seeking but not finding reasons to live, to love, to have fun, to change the world. A woman goes crazy, the Old World beckons, art dies, no one knows where to go next: disgust wars with self-mockery. It's *Série noire*, the American mystery losing its voice—no criminals, no victims, exactly, but still a massacre, the only way out through art, no matter how phony: the blank movie. But the ground is cleared.

Hurlements, in *Mémoires*, is an explosion, propelling the tale right out of its first section: immediately in the second part there is an atmosphere of palpable release, of ease, quiet, relaxation, freedom. Uncertainty remains but the tension is gone. New people begin to find each other; you can feel a group begin to come together. Despite the gloom promised by the section's epigraph from Huizinga, the deep reds that dominate two successive pages speak for a rising spirit: a sense of fellowship, growing into comradeship, a sense of mission, even if it is always undefined, a new political consciousness, a purchase on the world, the first stabs at its critique. Something is at stake, as bits on the sociology of youth break up against photos of young men and women in a café—there is an energy present here that is missing in the first part, and a finer wit.

In the last section there is again confusion, but it's a confusion full of life. On one page, "new forms of behavior," "what are they going to find?" "still far away," "we were not many," "new ambiance," "portraits of an intense life, where truly" combine with references to the Aztecs, "the great Indian totems of North America," Easter Island, "the delirious temples of India," "without doubt the greatest architects of all time," pictures of Debord and two other members of the LI, and a comic strip panel in the bottom right corner. Soldiers fire rifles and a machine gun: "BANG! RAT-TA-TA-TA." Clouds of dust rise. "It's the new mood of today," runs the caption Debord gives the picture, "a certain simplicity, a certain refinement. . . ." "In every way," runs a line on the next page, "it seemed unlikely this delirious story would ever end," but what follows is dissolution and disappearance, elegy and too many tangled routes to follow. The Old World seems to return with a force it lacked even in the first section, there are passages on Sir Galahad and secret societies, and the story closes: vanishing, as the second-to-last page of *Mémoires* has it, "without leaving a trace." And that of course is the best joke of all: all this, Debord was saying as he put the book together in December 1957, was just a prelude to the founding of the Situationist International, which was to win the world. Or was it not a joke at all? "Un pas en arrière," Debord titled an essay on the dissolution of the LI into the SI: "One Step Back." Perhaps Debord was saying that those first years of the LI were a time of experiment, of discovery—a utopia—that not even a new world could recreate.

One can read *Mémoires* somewhat differently. Just as its form pretends to deny the possibility of ordinary communication and discourse ("We have the advantage of no longer expecting anything from known activities, known individuals, and known institutions," Debord and Wolman wrote in their 1955 essay "Pourquoi le lettrisme?"), before it does anything else (bound in heavy sandpaper, *Mémoires* pretended that, when placed in a bookshelf, it would destroy other books), the discovery of a true communication is also what the book is about—or at any rate it is the quest for such a communication, the adventure of finding it and losing it, that the book describes.

Read in this way, the rhythm of *Mémoires* becomes one of isolation to contact, contact to community, community to broken contacts, broken contacts to isolation. In the course of that rhythm, subjects—individuals—become poeticized; so do objects—streets and buildings—and if the story itself does not leave a trace, the world will never look quite the same again. Early in *Mémoires* there is a quote from Guillaume Apollinaire's poem "Cors de chasse," lines about Thomas de Quincey and his "poor Ann," and a matching quote from de Quincey's own memoirs, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821), describing his search for the destitute girl he had befriended, promised to return to, to rescue, and whom he lost: "If she lived, doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other, at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other—a barrier no wider in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity!"

De Quincey's intoxicated wanderings through London, the Situationists wrote in "L'urbanisme unitaire à la fin des années 50" (*Internationale situationniste* 3, December 1959), were "a harbinger of the *dérive*"; Debord took de Quincey's belief that the backstreets of great cities contained secret, invisible "Northwest Passages" as a floating metaphor for the story he told in *Mémoires*. On the *dérive*, if you found the right street, you could find yourself anywhere—the pursuit of utopia was the utopia—and yet finally the appearance of de Quincey and Ann in *Mémoires* suggests that once one goes through one's Northwest Passage, there is no return to anyone else, to anywhere else, only a solitary drift through urban space as if it were outer space. "*Dark Passage,*" runs a movie title in *Mémoires*. "NEXT WEEK," announces another page, "*The Distant Light.*" "The story of the Northwest Passage."

Mémoires, then, can be read as if it turns on a metaphor that goes back to a story of two people who sought each other and, though they likely lived out days within shouting distance, were forever separated. It's tragic or it's sentimental, real life or merely a literary reference—but to move through the city holding such a possibility of loss before your eyes, as you gaze on advertisements, headlines, billboards, faces, bookshop windows, newsstands, buildings, as you find yourself drifting down streets you never noticed before, find yourself noticing new things in streets you have passed through endless times, is, perhaps, to move with a sense that just as everything can be lost, everything can be gained. The stakes are raised to an almost impossible level—and in the end it is this sense of an absolute that winds its way out of the pages of *Mémoires*.

The book speaks secret languages made out of the words and pictures everyone already knows. No page looks the same way twice. In one moment, every allusion is trivial and obvious, in another, everything is mysterious and impenetrable, but one cannot finish the book, truly get to the end of it, without realizing that somehow one has been given a glimpse of a new country, the most familiar terrain, where things have yet to be named. To use words from Debord's film *Critique de la séparation*, made in 1961, *Mémoires* is a picture of life cut and pasted out of the detritus of the Old World, a picture of "a life that has not really been found."

A Selection of Situationist Writing:

The documents in translation that follow below represent a fragmentary self-portrait of the Situationist International—a self-portrait made exclusively from previously untranslated (with one partial exception, noted below) or little-known Situationist writing.

Because a good deal of Situationist and even pre-Situationist writing has been translated into English, it seemed pointless to recapitulate it here. It should be noted. Guy Debord's *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1967), reprinted most recently in 1987 by Editions Gérard Lebovici, can be read as *Society of the Spectacle* in an unauthorized translation and pirate edition (Detroit: Black & Red, 1970, repr. 1977 and 1983). Raoul Vaneigem's *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967, repr. 1981) is available in an authorized translation by Donald Nicholson-Smith as *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (London and Seattle: Rebel Press and Left Bank Books, 1983). René Viénet's *Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), a narrative of the revolt of May 1968 with copious documentary appendices; *La véritable scission dans l'Internationale* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972), which includes Debord and Gianfranco Sanguinetti's "Théses sur l'Internationale situationniste et son temps"; and Debord's *Préface à la quatrième édition italienne*

Imaginary Maps of the Real World

Introduction: Greil Marcus

Translations and annotations: Thomas Y. Levin

de "La société du spectacle" (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1979) can sometimes be found in fugitive English translations.

There are two English-language Situationist anthologies. *Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International*, edited and translated by Christopher Gray, with design contributions by Jamie Reid (UK: Free Fall, 1974), is superbly illustrated and includes a striking commentary; it is out of print. Most of the work it translates, plus much more, is included in the unillustrated *Situationist International Anthology*, edited and translated by Ken Knabb (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981). The Knabb anthology contains nearly all of the best-known Situationist essays and manifestos, including action literature produced by the Situationist International and its allies during the Strasbourg scandal of 1966 and the May 1968 revolt, as well as pre- or extra-Situationist work, notably the narration and/or dialogue from two of Debord's early films and several Lettrist International essays.

Important work not yet translated includes *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale situationniste*, edited by Gérard Berreby (Paris: Editions Allia, 1985), which contains various COBRA and MIBI material, all Lettrist International publications (most notably the complete run of the newsletter *Potlatch*, also collected in *Potlatch: 1954–1957*, with an introduction by Debord [Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1985]), and a color facsimile reprint of the 1957 Asger Jorn collage book *Fin de Copenhague; Internationale situationniste, 1958–69* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1975), which collects the twelve numbers of the principal Situationist journal in facsimile; Debord's *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978* (Paris: Champ Libre, 1978), an illustrated collection of the scripts of his six films with shot descriptions; and Debord's *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle* (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1988). Jean-Jacques Raspaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer's *L'Internationale situationniste: Chronologie/Bibliographie/Protagonistes (Avec un index de noms insultés)* (Paris: Champ Libre, 1972) is a mostly reliable schematic reference.

What follows, then, represents only the smallest fraction of what might have been included; the "self-portrait" may nevertheless hold its shape because nothing here would have, perhaps could have, been written by any save those who in fact did write it. With gaps and lacunae posited, the six selections tell a unique story. In "Two Accounts of the Dérive," one gets a sense of the pointlessness, the play, the self-indulgence, the self-importance,

and the nothingness out of which the Situationist International emerged; in Jorn's "Detourned Painting" one begins to see a critique evolving from that apparent nothingness. "Unitary Urbanism at the End of the 1950s" combines the *dérive*, the drift down city streets, and assemblage, what the Situationists called *détournement*, the rearrangement of what was already there, to prophesy a new city. In "The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics or Art," Debord describes more pointedly than anywhere else what the Situationist International was about and what it was for; "The World of Which We Speak," save for various thematic introductory paragraphs an assemblage made wholly of clippings from newspapers and magazines (its first section, "La technique de l'isolement," appeared as "Isolation" in Gray's *Leaving the 20th Century*), spells out with blazing clarity and wit the target that from 1957 through 1969 the Situationist International created, posited, identified, and destroyed—after which the target, the world of which they spoke, reigned supreme, and the Situationist International ceased to be. Debord's elegy to Asger Jorn, "On Wild Architecture," is a decent homage to the story itself: an insistence on its reality, and a call echoed in the last phrase of *In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni*, Debord's last film: "A reprendre depuis le début" ("To begin again, from the beginning").

Bibliographic Data

1. Guy-Ernest Debord, "Deux comptes rendus de dérive," appendices to his "Théorie de la dérive," *Les lèvres nues* 9 (November 1956), pp. 10–13; the complete run of the journal (1954–1958) has been reprinted in facsimile (Paris: Plasma, 1978). Both texts are also reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 316–19. "Théorie" was also published without appendices in *Internationale situationniste* 2 (December 1958), pp. 19–23. For an English translation, see Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 50–54.

2. Asger Jorn, "Peinture détourné," in *Vingt peintures modifées par Asger Jorn*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Galerie Rive Gauche, 1959). The first section has been reprinted in facsimile in Mirella Bandini, *L'estetico il politico: Da Cobra all'Internazionale situazionista, 1948–1957* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1977), p. 318.

3. "L'urbanisme unitaire à la fin des années 50," *Internationale situationniste* 3 (December 1959), pp. 11–16; with six illustrations.

4. Guy Debord, "Les situationnistes et les nouvelles formes d'action dans la politique ou l'art," in *Destruktion af RSG-6: En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk International* (Odense, Denmark: Galerie EXI, 1963), pp. 15–18; reprinted in Debord, *Textes rares: 1957–1970* (Paris: n. p., 1981), pp. 18–22. The *RSG-6* catalogue also contains a Danish and a rather unreliable English translation of this essay; a more careful English rendition of excerpts from Debord's text can be found in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 317–18.

5. "Le monde dont nous parlons," *Internationale situationniste* 9 (August 1964), pp. 6–23.

6. Guy Debord, "De l'architecture sauvage," in *Le jardin d'Albisola*, text by Ezio Gribaudo, Alberico Sala, and Guy Debord (Turin: Edizioni d'Arte Fratelli Pozzo, 1974); reprinted in Debord, *Textes rares*, pp. 47–48.

Two Accounts of the Dérive

Guy-Ernest Debord

8.1
Guy Debord
Naked City, 1957

I. Encounters and Difficulties Following an Extended Dérive

On the evening of 25 December 1953, the Lettrists G.I. [Gilles Ivain], G.D. [Guy Debord], and G.L. [Gaëtan M. Langlais] enter an Algerian bar in the rue Xavier-Privas that they have long referred to as "Au Malais de Thomas" and in which they had spent the entire previous night. They fall into conversation with an approximately forty-year-old West Indian man, unusual in his elegance amidst the regulars of this dive, who is talking to K., the proprietor of the place, upon their arrival.

The man asks the Lettrists out of the blue whether they are not "in the army." Upon receiving a negative answer he then vainly insists on knowing "to what organization they belong." He introduces himself with the obviously false name Camille J. What follows is strewn with coincidences (the addresses he cites, the concerns he names that are exactly those of his interlocutors that very week, his birthday that is the same as G.I.'s) and with phrases loaded with double meanings and that seem to be calculated allusions to the *dérive*. Most remarkable, however, is his increasing delirium, which revolves around an idea of an urgent voyage: as he points out repeatedly "he is continuously traveling." J. goes on to say in all seriousness that upon arriving from Hamburg he had looked for the address of the bar where they found themselves at that moment—he had been there before for a moment and had liked it—but, unable to find it, had taken a jaunt to New York to ask his wife for the address. However, as the address was not to be found in New York either, it was by pure chance that he had just come upon the bar once again, having just arrived from Orly. (Not a single plane had landed at Orly for a number of days now due to a strike by the security personnel that had been further complicated by bad visibility conditions—G.D. knows this because he himself had arrived two nights earlier by train after having been delayed for two days at the Nice airport.) J. announces to G.L. with an air of sorrowful certainty that G.L.'s current activities must be above his abilities. (G.L. will in fact be excluded two months later.) J. suggests to the Lettrists that he meet them at the same place the next day and have them taste an excellent rum "from his plantation." He also spoke of introducing them to his wife but subsequently, and without any apparent contradiction, said that the next day "he would be a widower" as his wife was leaving by car early in the morning for Nice.

Following J.'s departure, K. (who knows nothing about the Lettrists' activities) is questioned but cannot say anything except that he recalls having seen him once have a drink, a few months ago.

The next day, J. comes to the rendezvous with his wife, a quite beautiful West Indian woman about his age. He makes an exceptional punch with his rum. J. and his wife exert a mysterious attraction on all the Algerians in the bar, who are simultaneously enthusiastic and deferential. The din of all the guitars together with the shouts and dances produces an agitation of a very unusual intensity. J. restores calm instantaneously by making an unexpected toast "to our brothers who are dying on the field of battle" (even though at the time there was no armed conflict of any scope anywhere except in Indochina). The conversation reaches the level of delirium of the previous evening, except this time with the participation of J.'s wife. Remarking that a ring that J. was wearing the night before is now on the finger of his wife, G.L. says rather quietly to G.I., alluding to their commentary from the previous evening that had not failed to evoke zombies and the identifying signals of secret sects, "Voodoo has changed hands." J.'s wife hears this phrase and smiles with complicity.

After speaking again of encounters and places that provoke his interlocutors, J. announces to them that he does not know if he himself will meet them again one day, since they are "perhaps too strong for him." They assure him that the opposite is the case. Just as they are about to separate, G.I. offers to give J.'s wife the address of a rather attractive bar in Nice, since she is about to go there. J. in turn responds coldly that it is unfortunately too late: she has been gone since the morning. He takes his leave affirming that now it is certain that they will see each other again some day "even if this should be in another world"—to which phrase he adds a "you know what I mean?" that completely corrects any mystical aspect that his statement might have had.

On the evening of 31 December in the same bar on the rue Xavier-Privas, the Lettrists come upon K. and the regulars terrorized—despite their own violent tendencies—by a sort of gang comprised of ten Algerians who have come from Pigalle and are occupying the place. The

rather mysterious story seems to involve both counterfeit money and the links it might have with the arrest of one of K.'s friends—for narcotics peddling—in the very same bar a few weeks earlier. Since it is obvious that the first concern of the visitors is to avoid involving the Europeans in a settling of accounts that will not awaken much police attention as long as it is between North Africans, and since K. asks them insistently not to leave the bar, G.D. and G.I. spend the night drinking at the counter (where the visitors have placed a girl they had brought along) speaking incessantly and very loudly in front of a silent audience in such a manner as to further aggravate the general unease. Just before midnight, for example, they ask who will have to die this year or the following year, or they refer to the saying of the condemned man scheduled to be executed at dawn on January first: "Now there's a year that's off to a good start," and make various other jests of this sort that cause almost all of the antagonists to turn pale. Even toward morning, with G.D. dead drunk, G.I. continues alone for a few hours with a similarly marked success. New Year's Day of 1954 takes place in the same conditions, the many maneuvers of intimidation and veiled threats unable to persuade the two Lettrists to leave before a brawl. The latter, in turn, are unable to reach any of their friends by telephone, whose very use requires considerable audaciousness. Finally, as night falls, K.'s friends reach a compromise with the strangers and everyone ungraciously goes their own way (K. subsequently avoids with trepidation any explanation of this event, and the Lettrists decide that to be discreet they will hardly refer to it).

The next day, toward the end of the afternoon, G.D. and G.I. suddenly realize that they are near the rue Vieille du Temple and decide to go and visit again a bar on that street where, six weeks earlier, G.I. had observed something surprising: when he had entered the bar during the course of a *dérive* together with P. S. [Patrick Straram] the barman expressed a certain emotion upon seeing him and had asked, "You are undoubtedly coming in for a drink?" Following the affirmative response he had continued: "There aren't any more. Come back tomorrow." G.I. in turn had mechanically responded "OK" and had left, and P.S., although stunned by such an absurd reaction, had followed him.

G.I. and G.D.'s arrival in the bar renders instantly silent about ten Yiddish-speaking men seated at two or three tables and all wearing hats. While the Lettrists drink a few glasses of alcohol at the counter, their backs turned toward the door, a man also wearing a hat runs in and the waitress—who they have never seen before—nods to them that it is to him that they should address themselves. The man grabs a chair, places it at a distance of about one meter, sits down, and starts speaking to them in a very loud voice and for a rather long time in Yiddish, in a tone at times convincing and at times menacing yet without deliberate aggressivity and, above all, without seeming to imagine that they might not be understanding a thing. The Lettrists remain impassive and look with the greatest possible impertinence at everyone present, all of whom seem to be awaiting their response with some distress. Ultimately, they leave. Once outside, they both agree that they have never seen an atmosphere so frigid, compared to which the gangsters from the previous evening were mere lambs. Wandering *[dérivant]* still a bit further on they come to the pont Notre-Dame at which point they notice that they are being followed by two men from the bar, in the tradition of the gangster film. It is on this tradition that they feel they must rely in order to give their pursuers the slip; they cross the bridge casually and then suddenly descend to the right onto the quay of the Ile de la Cité on which they run, passing under the Pont-Neuf, until they reach the square Vert-Galant. There, they scramble back up to the place Pont-Neuf by means of the stairs hidden behind the statue of Henri IV. In front of the statue, two other men wearing hats come running up—undoubtedly to cut them off at the riverbank of the quai des Orfèvres (which appears to be the only exit if one is unaware of the stairs)—and stop in their tracks upon seeing them come into view. The two Lettrists approach and then walk right by the men who, in their surprise, do not budge. The Lettrists continue down the sidewalk of the Pont-Neuf towards the Right Bank. Here they notice that the two men have once again begun to follow them and it seems that a car on the Pont-Neuf—with which these men seem to be exchanging signals—has apparently joined in the pursuit. G.I. and G.D. then cross the quai du Louvre at the very moment when the traffic (which is very heavy at this location) has the right of way. Then, taking advantage of this lead, they hurriedly traverse the

8.2
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959

ground floor of the La Samaritaine department store, exiting onto the rue de Rivoli in order to rush down into the Louvre subway station, subsequently changing trains at Chatelet. The few passengers who are wearing hats seem suspicious. G.I. is convinced that a man from the West Indies who happens to be near him gave him a signal that he interprets to mean that he is an emissary sent by J. to defend them against the surprising outbreak of antagonistic forces. Getting off at the Monge station, the Lettrists arrive at the Montagne-[Sainte-]Geneviève via the deserted Continent Contrescarpe where night falls amidst an atmosphere of increasing unease.[1]

II. Gathering of Urban Ambiances by Means of the Dérive

On Tuesday, 6 March 1956 at 10 A.M., G.-E. Debord and Gil J Wolman meet in the rue des Jardins-Paul and head north in order to explore the possibilities of traversing Paris at that latitude. Despite their intentions they quickly find themselves drifting toward the east and traverse the upper section of the 11th arrondissement, an area whose poor commercial standardization is a good example of repulsive petit-bourgeois landscape. The only pleasing encounter is the store at 160, rue Oberkampf: "Delicatessen-Provisions A. Breton." Upon reaching the 20th arrondissement, Debord and Wolman enter a series of narrow alleys that ultimately lead to the intersection of rue de Ménilmontant and rue des Couronnes, by way of deserted lots and very abandoned-looking low buildings. On the north side of rue des Couronnes a staircase gives them access to a network of alleys similar to the previous ones, but marred by an annoyingly picturesque character. Their itinerary is subsequently inflected in a northwesterly direction.

Between the avenue Simon Bolivar and the avenue Mathurin Moreau they cross a prominence where a number of empty streets become entangled, a dismaying monotony of facades (the rue Rémy de Gourmont, rue Edgar Poe, etc.). Shortly thereafter, they suddenly come upon the far end of the canal [Saint-]Martin and unexpectedly find themselves facing the impressive rotunda by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, a virtual ruin left in an incredible state of abandonment, whose charm is singularly enhanced by the curve of the elevated subway line that passes by at close distance. One thinks here of Maréchal Toukhachevsky's fortuitous projection, previously cited in *La révolution surréaliste*,[2] of how much more beautiful Versailles would be if a factory were to be constructed between the palace and the water basin.

Upon studying the terrain the Lettrists feel able to discern the existence of an important psychogeographic hub [*plaque tournante*]—its center occupied by the Ledoux rotunda—that could be defined as a Jaurés-Stalingrad unity, opening out onto at least four significant psychogeographical bearings—the canal [Saint-]Martin, boulevard de la Chapelle, rue d'Aubervilliers, and the canal de l'Ourcq—and probably more. In conjunction with the concept of the hub, Wolman recalls the intersection in Cannes that he designated "the center of the world" in 1952. One should no doubt liken this to the clearly psychogeographic appeal of the illustrations found in books for very young schoolchildren; here, for didactic reasons, one finds collected in a single image a harbor, a mountain, an isthmus, a forest, a river, a dike, a cape, a bridge, a ship, and an archipelago. Claude Lorrain's images of harbors are not unrelated to this procedure.[3]

Debord and Wolman continue to walk north along the beautiful and tragic rue d'Aubervilliers. They eat lunch on the way. Having taken the boulevard Macdonald up to the canal [Saint-]Denis they follow the right bank of this canal heading north, making stops—sometimes long, sometimes brief—at various bars patronized by the bargemen. They abandon the canal at a familiar lock directly north of the pont du Landy and arrive at 6:30 P.M. in a Spanish bar regularly referred to by the workers who frequent it as the "Tavern of the Revolters." This bar is located at the westernmost point of Aubervilliers, across from the site called "La Plaine" that is part of the town of [Saint-]Denis. Passing by the lock once again, they roam about for a while in Aubervilliers, an area that they have traversed dozens of times at night but which is unfamiliar to them in daytime. As darkness descends they finally decide to put an end to a *dérive* that they deem to be of little interest as such.

Undertaking the critique of their operation, they establish that a *dérive* that starts out from the same point would do better to head in a north-by-northwesterly direction and that since from this point of view Paris remains to a large extent unknown, the number of systematic *dérives* of this sort should be increased. They also ascertain that the contradiction between chance and conscious choice involved in the *dérive* itself recurs at subsequent levels of equilibrium and that this development is unlimited. As a program for upcoming *dérives* Debord proposes the direct link between the center Jaurès-Stalingrad (or Centre Ledoux) and the Seine as well as the exploration of its tributaries towards the west. Wolman proposes a *dérive* that would begin at the "Tavern of the Revolters" and would follow the canal north all the way to [Saint-]Denis and beyond.

Notes

1. On the "unité d'ambiance" of the "Continent Contrescarpe," a square in the 5th arrondissement close to the headquarters of the LI (and later the SI) at 32, rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, cf. "Position du Continent Contrescarpe," *Les lèvres nues* 9 (November 1956); reprinted in Berreby, *Documents*, pp. 324–26.

2. Cf. Paul Eluard and Benjamin Péret, "Revue de la presse," *La révolution surréaliste* 3 (October 1927), p. 64.

3. On numerous occasions in his writings Debord comments on the harbor images of Lorrain—two of which are depicted in Debord's film *La société du spectacle* (cf. Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978* [Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1978], p. 74). Consider, for example, the following remark taken from his essay "Introduction à une critique de la géographie urbaine," *Les lèvres nues* 6 (September 1955): "I can think of only one thing that can compete with the beauty of the subway maps posted in Paris, and that is the two ports at dusk painted by Claude Lorrain—both at the Louvre and depicting the very border line of two extremely dissimilar urban ambiances. One must understand that in speaking here of beauty I don't have in mind plastic beauty—the new type of beauty can only be a beauty of situations—but simply the particularly moving presentation, in both cases, of a *sum of possibilities*" (Guy-Ernest Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," in Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 7 [translation modified]).

Asger Jorn

Detourned Painting

Intended for the general public. Reads effortlessly.

Be modern,
collectors, museums.
If you have old paintings,
do not despair.
Retain your memories
but detourn them
so that they correspond with your era.
Why reject the old
if one can modernize it
with a few strokes of the brush?
This casts a bit of contemporaneity
on your old culture.
Be up to date,
and distinguished
at the same time.
Painting is over.
You might as well finish it off.
Detourn.
Long live painting.

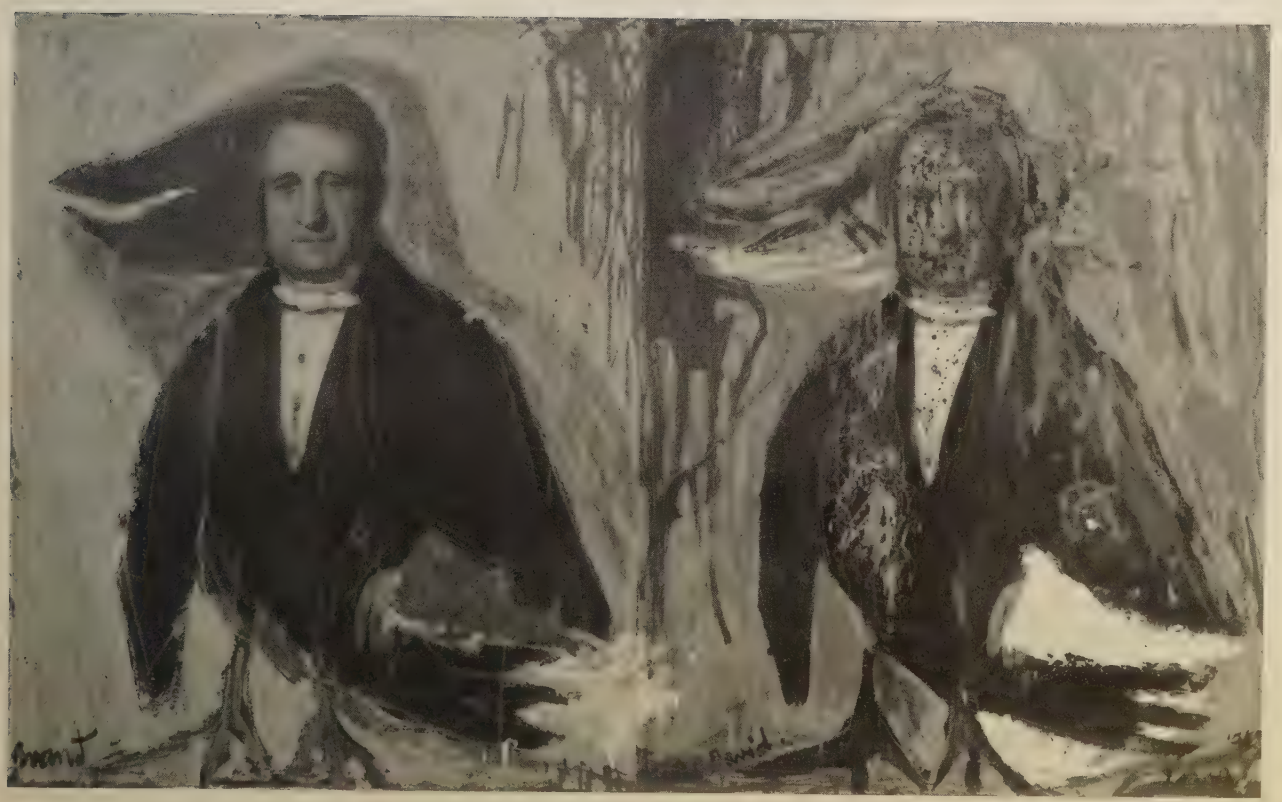
Intended for connoisseurs. Requires limited attention.

All works of art are objects and should be treated as such, but these objects are not ends in themselves: they are tools with which to influence spectators. The artistic object, despite its seemingly objectlike character, therefore presents itself as a link between two subjects, the creating and provoking subject on the one hand, and the receiving subject on the other. The latter does not perceive the work of art as a pure object, but as the sign of a human presence.

The problem for the artist is not to know if the work of art should be considered as an object or as a subject, since the two are inseparable. The problem is to capture and to formulate the desired tension in the work between appearance and sign.

The conception of art implicit in "action painting" reduces art to an act in itself, in which the object, the work of art, is a mere trace, and in which there is no more communication with the audience. This is the attitude of the pure creator who does nothing but fulfill *himself* through the materials for his own pleasure.

8.3
Asger Jorn
Les deux pingouins
(The Two Penguins), 1962



This attitude is irreconcilable with an interest in the object as such, the work of art in its anonymity, that is, the experience of pleasure in its purity when facing a sculpture whose country of origin is unknown or whose period is uncertain. Here the object floats freely in space and time. My preoccupation with objectivity and subjectivity is situated above all between these two poles, or more precisely between my will and my intelligence. I must admit that as far as the third attitude is concerned, that of the spectator, it does not concern me much. Whether one intends it or not, in the end it is to him that everything happens.

The classic and latin concept has always accorded a primacy to the object whereas the oriental concept ascribes everything to the subject. Ever since the establishment of the internal tension of European culture, the gothic, or northern, concept attempts to play within the dialectic of the two opposites. Therefore I am not limited by such a previously made choice.

The result is that this perspective leads one necessarily to consider all creations simultaneously as reinvestments, revalorizations of the act of humanity. The object, reality, or *presence* takes on value only as an agent of *becoming*. But it is impossible to establish a future without a past. The future is made through relinquishing or sacrificing the past. He who possesses the past of a phenomenon also possesses the sources of its becoming. Europe will continue to be the source of modern development. Here, the only problem is to know who should have the right to the sacrifices and to the relinquishments of this past, that is, who will inherit the futurist power. I want to rejuvenate European culture. I begin with art. Our past is full of becoming. One needs only to crack open the shells. *Détournement* is a game born out of the capacity for *devalorization*. Only he who is able to devalorize can create new values. And only there where there is *something* to devalorize, that is, an already established value, can one engage in devalorization. It is up to us to devalorize or to be devalorized according to our ability to reinvest in our own culture. There remain only two possibilities for us in Europe: to be sacrificed or to sacrifice. It is up to you to choose between the historical monument and the act that merits it.

The evidence of premeditation.

In 1939 I wrote my first article ("Intime banaliteter" [Intimate banalities] in the journal *Helhesten*) in which I expressed my love for sofa painting,[1] and for the last twenty years I have been preoccupied with the idea of rendering homage to it. Thus I act with full responsibility and after extensive reflection. Only my current situation has enabled me to accomplish the expensive task of demonstrating that the preferred sustenance of painting is painting.

In this exhibition I erect a monument in honor of bad painting. Personally, I like it better than good painting. But above all, this monument is indispensible, both for me and for everyone else. It is painting sacrificed. This sort of offering can be done gently the way doctors do it when they kill their patients with new medicines that they want to try out. It can also be done in barbaric fashion, in public and with pomp. This is what I like. I solemnly tip my hat and let the blood of my victims flow while intoning Baudelaire's hymn to beauty.

Notes

1. There, I wrote: "Those who try to combat the production of painting are the enemies of today's best art. These forest lakes on colored paper, hanging in gilded frames in thousands of apartments, are among the most profound artistic inspirations.

The great masterpieces are nothing but accomplished banalities, and the deficiency of the majority of banalities is that they are not complete. These works do not push banality to the limit of its profundity, they fail to explore the full extent of its consequences; instead they rest on a foundation of aestheticism and spirituality. What one calls natural is liberated banality, obviousness.

Nowhere else but in Paris does one find gathered together so many things of bad taste. This is the very secret which explains why Paris remains the place where artistic inspiration is alive" (Asger Jorn, "Intime banaliteter," *Helhesten: Tidsskrift for Kunst* 1 [May 1941], pp. 33–38 [note in original text]. An English translation of this article can be found under the title "Banalities," in *Guggenheim International Award 1964* [New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1963], pp. 102–3).

Unitary Urbanism at the End of the 1950s

In August 1956, a tract signed by the groups preparing the founding of the SI called for the boycott of a would-be "Festival of Avant-Garde Art" being held in Marseille at the time, an event that the tract called the most complete, official selection of "what in twenty years will represent the idiocy of the 1950s."[1]

And indeed, the modern art of this period turns out to have been dominated by, and almost exclusively composed of, camouflaged repetitions, that is, a stagnation that bespeaks of both the definitive exhaustion of the entire old theater of cultural operations as well as of the incapacity to discover a new one. Nevertheless, at the same time certain movements have constituted themselves underground. Such is the case for the origins of unitary urbanism (UU), discovered as of 1953 and first named as such at the end of 1956 in a tract distributed on the occasion of a demonstration by our Italian comrades in Turin ("obscure statements" wrote *La Nuova Stampa* on 11 December, in the style of the following warning: "Your children's future depends on it: demonstrate in favor of unitary urbanism!").[2] Unitary urbanism is one of the central concerns of the SI and despite any delays and difficulties that might arise in its application, it is entirely correct (as the opening report of the Munich conference confirms) that unitary urbanism has already begun the moment it appears as a program of research and development.[3]

The 1950s are about to come to a close. Without trying to predict whether the idiocy of this decade in the art and practice of life—itself a function of more general causes—will diminish or intensify in the short run, it is time to examine the current state of UU following the first stage of its development. A number of points need to be clarified.

First of all, unitary urbanism is not a doctrine of urbanism but a critique of urbanism. By the same token, our participation in experimental art is a critique of art, and sociological research ought to be a critique of sociology. No isolated discipline whatsoever can be tolerated in itself; we are moving toward a global creation of existence.

Unitary urbanism is distinct from problems of housing and yet is bound to engulf them; it is all the more distinct from current commercial exchange. At present it envisages a terrain of experience for the *social space* of the cities of the future. It is not a reaction to functionalism, but rather a move past it; it is a matter of reaching—

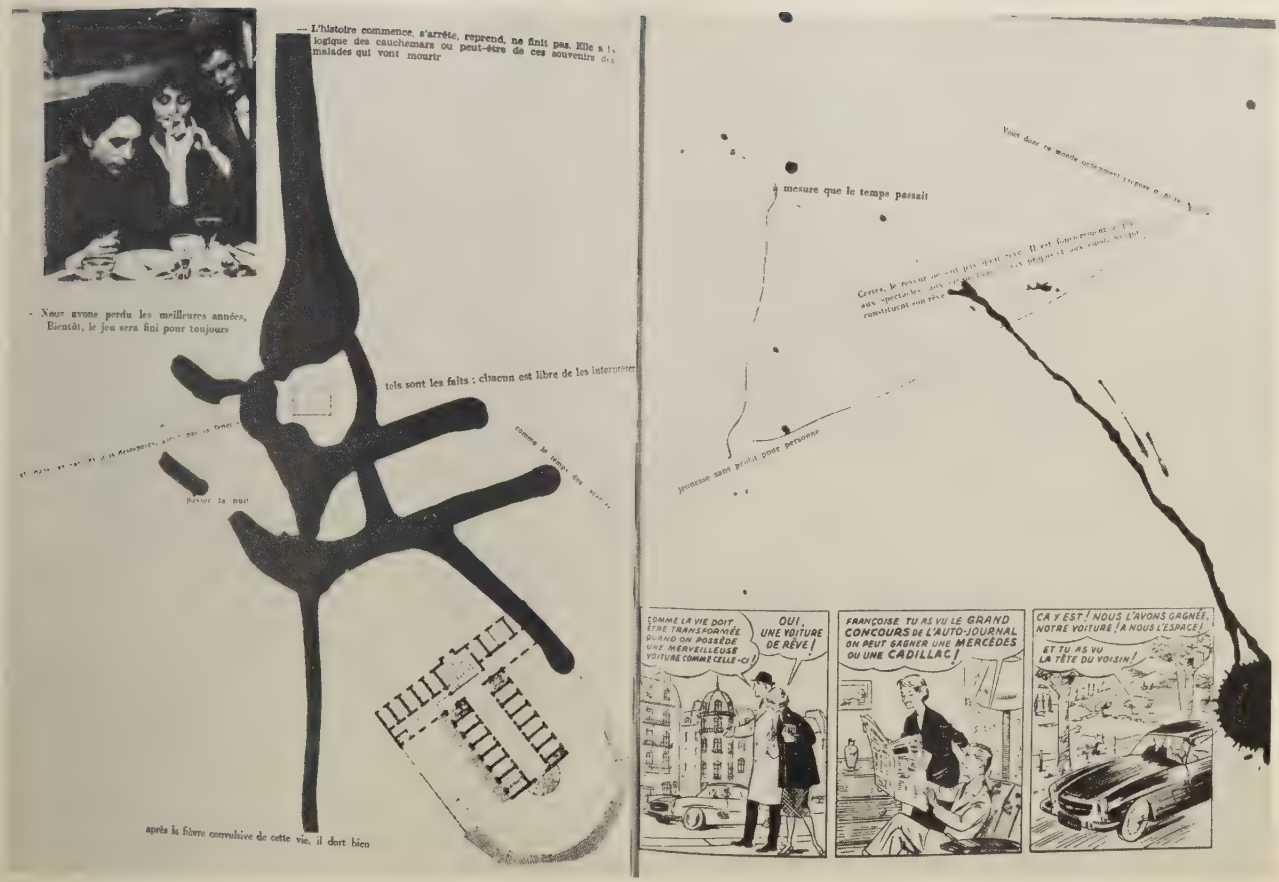
beyond the immediately utilitary—an enthralling functional environment. Functionalism—which still has avant-garde pretensions because it continues to encounter outdated resistance—has already triumphed to a large extent. Its positive contributions—the adaptation to practical functions, technical innovation, comfort, the banishment of superimposed ornament—are today banalities. Yet although its field of application is, when all is said and done, narrow, this has not led functionalism to adopt a relative theoretical modesty. In order to justify philosophically the extension of its principles of renovation to the entire organization of social life, functionalism has fused, seemingly without a thought, with the most static conservative doctrines (and, simultaneously, has itself congealed into an inert doctrine). One must construct uninhabitable ambiences; construct the streets of real life, the scenery of daydreams. The issue of church construction provides a particularly illuminating criterion. Functionalist architects tend to agree to construct churches thinking—if they are not stupid deists—that the church, an edifice without function within a functional urbanism, can be treated as a free exercise of plastic form. Their error is that they fail to consider the psycho-functional reality of the church. The functionalists, who are the expression of the technological utilitarianism of an era, cannot successfully build a single church if one considers that the cathedral was once the unitary accomplishment of a society that one has to call primitive, given that it was much further embedded than we are in the miserable prehistory of humanity. In the very era of the technologies that gave rise to functionalism, the Situationist architects, for their part, are searching to create new frames of behavior free of banality as well as of all the old taboos. The Situationist architects are thus absolutely opposed to the construction and even to the conservation of religious buildings with which they find themselves in direct competition. Unitary urbanism merges objectively with the interests of a comprehensive subversion.

Just as unitary urbanism cannot be reduced to questions of housing, it is also distinct from aesthetic problems. It opposes the passive spectacle, the principle of our culture (where the organization of the spectacle extends all the more scandalously the more the means of human intervention increase). In light of the fact that today cities themselves are presented as lamentable spectacles, a supplement to the museums for tourists driven around in glassed-in buses, UU envisages the urban environment as the terrain of a game in which one participates.[4]

Unitary urbanism is not ideally separated from the current terrain of the cities. It is developed out of the experience of this terrain and based on existing constructions. As a result it is just as important that we exploit the existing decors—through the affirmation of a playful urban space such as is revealed by the *dérive*—as it is that we construct completely unknown ones. This interpenetration (employment of the present city and construction of the future city) entails the deployment of architectural *détournement*.

Unitary urbanism is opposed to the temporal fixation of cities. It leads instead to the advocacy of a permanent transformation, an accelerated movement of the abandonment and reconstruction of the city in temporal and at times spatial terms. We are thus able to envisage making use of the climatic conditions in which two major architectural civilizations arose—in Cambodia and in southwest Mexico—in order to construct moving cities in the jungle. The new neighborhoods of such a city could be constructed increasingly towards the west (which would be gradually reclaimed as one goes along) while to the same extent the east would be abandoned to the overgrowth of tropical vegetation, thereby creating on its own layers of gradual transition between the modern city and wild nature. This city, pursued by the forest, would offer not only the unsurpassable zone of *dérive* that would take shape behind it; it would also be a marriage with nature more audacious than the attempts by Frank Lloyd Wright. Furthermore, it would have the advantage of a mise-en-scène of passing time over a social space condemned to creative renovation.

Unitary urbanism is opposed to the fixation of people at certain points of a city. It is the foundation for a civilization of leisure and of play. One should note that in the shackles of the current economic system, technology has been used to further multiply the pseudo-games of passivity and social disintegration (television) while the new forms of playful participation also rendered possible by the same technology are regulated by all sorts of police: amateur radio operators, for example, are reduced to technological boy scouts.


— L'histoire commence, s'arrête, reprend, ne finit pas. Elle a la logique des cauchemars ou peut-être de ces souvenirs des malades qui vont mourir
- Nous avons perdu les meilleures années, Bientôt, le jeu sera fini pour toujours
tels sont les faits : chacun est libre de les interpréter
après la fièvre convulsive de cette vie, il dort bien
à mesure que le temps passait
jeunesse sans profit pour personne
COMME LA VIE DOIT ÊTRE TRANSFORMÉE QUAND ON POSSÈDE UNE MERVEILLEUSE VOITURE COMME CELLE-CI!
OUI, UNE VOITURE DE RÊVE!
FRANÇOISE TU AS VU LE GRAND CONCOURS DE L'AUTO-JOURNAL ON PEUT GAGNER UNE MERCÈDES OU UNE CADILLAC!
ÇA Y EST! NOUS L'AVONS GAGNÉE, NOTRE VOITURE! À NOUS L'ESPACE!
ET TU AS VU LA TÊTE DU VOISIN!

8.4
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959

GUINNESS
IS GOOD FOR YOU
AVENTURIER
"ENFANT PERDU"
BIÈRE GARDÉ, le FURET
la totalité culturelle hors de laquelle
NOUS AVONS DES QUANTITÉS DE SOUVENIRS D'AUTRES CIVILISATIONS... DES OBJETS BIZARRES
A DEMI ENFOUIS SUR LES COTEAUX DE L'ILE DE PAQUES

8.5
Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959

Since the Situationist experience of the *dérive* is simultaneously a means of study of, and a game in, the urban milieu, it is already on the track of unitary urbanism. If unitary urbanism refuses to separate theory from practice, this is not only in order to promote construction (or research on construction by means of models) along with theoretical ideas. The point of such a refusal is above all not to separate the direct, collectively experienced playful use of the city from the aspect of urbanism that involves construction. The real games and emotions in today's cities are inseparable from the projects of UU just as later the realized projects of UU should not be isolated from games and emotions that will arise within these accomplishments. The *dérives* that the Situationist International is committed to undertake in the spring of 1960 in Amsterdam using quite powerful means of transportation and telecommunication are envisaged as both an objective study of the city and as a communication game.[5] In fact, beyond its essential lessons, the *dérive* furnishes only knowledge that is very precisely dated. In a few years, the construction or demolition of houses, the relocation of micro-societies and of fashions, will suffice to change a city's network of superficial attractions—a very encouraging phenomenon for the moment when we will come to establish an active link between the *dérive* and Situationist urban construction. Until then, the urban milieu will certainly change on its own, anarchically, ultimately rendering obsolete the *dérives* whose conclusions could not be translated into conscious transformations of this milieu. But the first lesson of the *dérive* is its own status as a game.

We are only at the beginning of urban civilization; it is up to us to bring it about ourselves using the pre-existing conditions as our point of departure. All the stories that we live, the *dérive* of our life, are characterized by the search for—or the lack of—an overarching construction. The transformation of the environment calls forth new emotional states that are first experienced passively and then, with heightened consciousness, give way to constructive reactions. London was the first urban result of the industrial revolution and the English literature of the nineteenth century bears witness to an increasing awareness of the problems of the atmosphere and of the qualitatively different possibilities in a large urban area. The love between Thomas de Quincey and poor Ann, separated by chance and searching for one another without ever coming upon each other "through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other . . ." marks a turning point in the slow historical evolution of the passions.[6] In fact, Thomas de Quincey's real life from 1804 to 1812 makes him a precursor of the *dérive*: "Seeking ambitiously for a *north-west passage*, instead of circumnavigating all the capes and headlands I had doubled in my outward voyage, I came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys . . . I could almost have believed, at times, that I must be the first discoverer of some of these *terrae incognitae*, and doubted, whether they had yet been laid down in the modern charts of London."[7] Towards the end of the century this sensation is so frequently expressed in novelistic writing that [Robert Louis] Stevenson presents a character who, in London at night, is astonished "to walk for such a long time in such a complex decor without encountering even the slightest shadow of an adventure" (*New Arabian Nights*).[8] The urbanists of the twentieth century will have to construct adventures.

The simplest Situationist act would consist in abolishing all the memories of the *employment of time* of our epoch. It is an epoch which, up until now, has lived far below its means.

Notes

1. The tract, entitled "Ordre de Boycott," and signed by G.-E. Debord, Asger Jorn, and Gil J Wolman, is reproduced in facsimile in the documents section of Mirella Bandini's study *L'estetico il politico: Da Cobra all'Internazionale situazionista, 1948–1957* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1977), p. 274. It can also be found in facsimile in Berreby, *Documents*, p. 269.

2. The tract, entitled "Manifestate a favore dell'Urbanesimo Unitario," is reprinted in facsimile in Bandini, *L'estetico il politico*, p. 275.

3. Cf. "La troisième conférence de l'I.S. à Munich," *Internationale situationniste* 3 (December 1959), p. 19ff.

4. The example of tourism reappears in the film *La société du spectacle* where Debord employs an image of "tourists touring Paris in sight-seeing buses or *bateau mouches*, their guides pointing out what there is to see" (cf. Debord, *Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978* [Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1978], p. 97).

5. For a description of the Amsterdam *dérive*, cf. the final section of "Die Welt als Labyrinth," *Internationale situationniste* 4 (June 1960), p. 7.

6. Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1971 [1821]), p. 64.

7. Ibid., p. 81; first emphasis in citation not in original text.

8. For a recent reprint of this text, which was originally published in London by Chatto & Windus in 1882, see Robert Louis Stevenson, *New Arabian Nights* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986).

Guy Debord

The Situationists and the New Forms of Action in Politics or Art

The Situationist movement manifests itself simultaneously as an artistic avant-garde, as an experimental investigation of the free construction of daily life, and finally as a contribution to the theoretical and practical articulation of a new revolutionary contestation. From now on, all fundamental cultural creation as well as any qualitative transformation of society is indissoluably linked to the further development of this unitary approach.

Despite occasional differences in its ideological and juridical disguises, it is one and the same society—marked by alienation, totalitarian control, and passive spectacular consumption—that predominates everywhere. One cannot understand the coherence of this society without an all-encompassing critique informed by the opposing project of a liberated creativity, that is, the project of the dominion of all men over their own history and at all levels.

To bring this project and this critique—which are *inseparable* since the one implies the other—into the present requires an immediate revival of all of the radicalism championed by the workers' movement, by modern poetry and art, and by the thought of the era of the surpassing of philosophy from Hegel to Nietzsche. This requires that one first acknowledge—without maintaining any comforting illusions—the full extent of the failure of the entire revolutionary project in the first three decades of this century and its official replacement in all parts of the world and in all domains by cheap and mendacious imitations that recuperate and re-establish the old social order.

Naturally such a resuscitation of radicalism also involves a substantial and thorough study of all previous emancipatory endeavors. An understanding of how these endeavors failed due to isolation or have reverted into global mystification enables one to better grasp the coherence of the world that is to be changed. Through the rediscovery of this coherence one can, in turn, salvage the results of numerous partial explorations undertaken in the recent past, each of which thereby attain their own truth. The insight into this reversible coherence of the world—such as it is and such as it could be—unveils the fallaciousness of halfway measures. It also exposes the fact that such halfway measures are involved whenever a model of the functioning of the dominant society—with its categories of hierarchy and

specialization and analogously its customs or its tastes—is resurrected within the very forces of negation.

Furthermore, the rate of the world's material development has increased. It is steadily amassing more and more virtual powers while the specialists that govern that society are forced, by the very fact of their role as guardians of passivity, to neglect to make use of them. This development produces simultaneously a generalized dissatisfaction and objective mortal dangers, neither of which can be controlled in a lasting manner by the specialized leaders.

Once it has been grasped that this is the perspective within which the Situationists call for the surpassing of art, it will become clear that when we speak of a unified vision of art and politics this absolutely does not mean that we recommend any sort of subordination of art to politics whatsoever. For us and for all those who are beginning to view this epoch in a demystified manner, there has been no more modern art anywhere at all—in precisely the same way that there has been no further formation of revolutionary politics anywhere at all—since the end of the 1930s. The current revival of both modern art and revolutionary politics can only be their *surpassing*, which is to say precisely the realization of what was their most fundamental demand.

The new contestation that the Situationists are talking about is already manifesting itself everywhere. In the large spaces of noncommunication and isolation organized by the current powers that be, indications are surfacing by way of new types of scandals from one country to another and from one continent to another: their exchange has begun.

The task of the avant-garde wherever it finds itself is to bring together these experiences and these people, that is, to simultaneously unify such groups and the coherent foundation of their project as well. We must make known, explain, and develop these initial gestures of the next revolutionary epoch. They are characterized by their concentration of new forms of struggle and a new—either manifest or latent—content: the critique of the existing world. In this way, the dominant society that is so proud of its permanent modernization will find its match, since it has finally produced a modernized negation.

We have been rigorous in precluding ambitious intellectuals or artists incapable of really understanding us from participating in the Situationist movement. We have also been equally rigorous in rejecting and denouncing various falsifications (of which the most recent example is the so-called Nashist "Situationism"). However, we are also just as determined to acknowledge as Situationists, to support, and never disavow the authors of these new radical gestures even if many of these gestures are not yet entirely conscious but only on the track of the coherence of today's revolutionary program.

We will limit ourselves to a few examples of gestures that have our full approval. On 16 January some revolutionary students in Caracas made an armed attack on an exhibition of French art and carried off five paintings that they subsequently offered to return in exchange for the release of political prisoners. The forces of order recaptured the paintings after a gun battle with Winston Bermudes, Luis Monselve, and Gladys Troconis. A few days later some other comrades threw two bombs at the police van transporting the recovered paintings. Unfortunately, they did not succeed in destroying it. This is clearly an exemplary way to treat the art of the past, to bring it back into play for what really matters in life. Since the death of Gauguin ("I tried to establish the right to dare everything") and of Van Gogh, their work, recuperated by their enemies, has probably never received from the cultural world an homage so true to their spirit as the act of these Venezuelans. During the Dresden insurrection of 1849 Bakunin proposed, unsuccessfully, that the insurgents take the paintings out of the museum and put them on a barricade at the entrance to the city, to see if this might prevent the attacking troops from continuing their fire. We can thus see how this skirmish in Caracas links up with one of the highest moments of revolutionary uprising in the last century and goes even further.

The action of Danish comrades during the last few weeks strikes us as no less motivated: on a number of occasions they have resorted to the use of incendiary bombs against travel agencies that organize tourist voyages to Spain, or they have made use of clandestine radio broadcasts as a means of alerting the public against the employment of atomic weapons. In the context of the comfortable and boring "socialized" capitalism of the Scandinavian countries, it is very encouraging to see the sudden appearance of people whose violence exposes certain aspects of the other violence that is at the foundation of this "humanized" order: its monopoly on information, for example, or the organized alienation of leisure or tourism. The horrible flip-side of this comfortable boredom, which one must accept as part of the bargain, is not only a peace that is not life but also a peace built upon the threat of atomic death; not only is tourism merely a miserable spectacle that conceals the real countries through which one is traveling, but the reality of the country transformed in this manner into a neutral spectacle is the police of Franco.

Finally the action of the English comrades who divulged in April the location and the plans of the "Regional Shelter of Government #6"[1] has the immense merit of revealing the degree to which state power has already progressed in its organization of terrain, the highly advanced staging of a totalitarian operation of authority. This authority is not, however, tied solely to a military perspective. Rather, it is the omnipresent threat of thermonuclear war that serves now, in both the East and the West, to maintain the submissiveness of the masses, to organize the *shelters of power*, and to reinforce the psychological and material defenses of the power of the ruling classes. On the surface the rest of modern urbanism complies with the same preoccupations. As early as April 1962, in the seventh issue of the French-language Situationist journal *Internationale situationniste*, we wrote the following about the individual shelters constructed in the United States during the preceding year:

> But here, as in every racket, protection is only a pretext. The true use of the shelters is to measure—and thereby to reinforce—people's docility and to manipulate this docility in a manner advantageous to the ruling society. The shelters, considered as the creation of a new consumable good in the society of

> abundance, prove more than any preceding product that people can be made to work to satisfy highly artificial needs, needs that most certainly "remain needs without ever having been desires" (cf. *Préliminaires du 20 Juillet 1960*). . . . The new habitat now taking shape within the "large housing developments" is not really distinct from the architecture of the shelters; it merely represents a lower level of that architecture; of course, the two are closely related. . . . The concentration-camp organization of the surface of the earth is the normal state of a society in the process of development, whose condensed subterranean version merely represents that society's pathological excess. This sickness reveals all the better the real nature of its surface "health."[2]

The English have just made a decisive contribution to the study of this sickness, and thus also to the study of "normal" society. This study is itself inseparable from a struggle that is not afraid to violate the old national taboos of "treason" by breaking the *secrecy* that is vital to the smooth operation of power in modern society in so many matters behind the thick screen of its "information" glut. The sabotage was subsequently extended—despite the efforts of the police and numerous arrests—by surprise invasions of secret military headquarters isolated in the countryside (where some officials were photographed against their will) or by the systematic overloading of forty telephone lines belonging to British security centers through the continuous dialing of ultra-secret numbers that had also been discovered.

It is this first attack against the ruling organization of social space that we wanted to salute and further expand by organizing in Denmark the "Destruction RSG-6" demonstration. In doing so we had envisaged not only the international expansion of this struggle, but equally its extension to yet another front of the same global struggle: the artistic domain.

The cultural activity that one could call Situationist begins with the projects of unitary urbanism or of the constructions of situations in life. The outcome of these projects, in turn, cannot be separated from the history of the movement engaged in the realization of the totality of revolutionary possibilities contained in the present society. However, as regards the immediate actions that must be undertaken within the framework that we want to destroy, critical art can be produced as of now using the existing means of cultural expression, that is, everything from the cinema to paintings. This is what the Situationists summed up in their theory of *détournement*. Critical in its content, such art must also be critical of itself in its very form. Such work is a sort of communication that, recognizing the limitations of the specialized sphere of hegemonic communication, "will now contain *its own critique*."[3]

For "RSG-6" we first of all created the atmosphere of an atomic fallout shelter as the first site meant to provoke one to think. Subsequently one encounters a zone that stages the rigorous negation of this sort of necessity. The medium here employed in a critical fashion is painting.

The revolutionary role of modern art that culminated in dadaism was the destruction of all conventions in art, language, or actions. Since apparently what has been destroyed in art or in philosophy is still not yet swept out of newspapers or churches, and since the critique of weapons had not followed at the time certain advances in the weaponry of critique, dadaism itself has become an acknowledged cultural style. Indeed dada form was recently turned into reactionary advertisement by neo-dadaists making a career by taking up the style invented before 1920 and exploiting each detail in enormously exaggerated fashion, thereby making this style serve the acceptance and decoration of the present world.

Nevertheless, the negative truth contained by modern art has always been a *justified* negation of the society which surrounded it. When, in 1937 in Paris, the Nazi ambassador Otto Abetz asked Picasso in front of his canvas *Guernica*, "Did you make that?" Picasso very rightly responded: "No. You did."

The negation and also the black humor that were so widespread in poetry and modern art in the wake of the

8.6
J. V. Martin
Den Gyldne Flåde
(The Golden Fleet) (9 Paintings), 1960

experience of World War I surely deserve to reappear in light of the *spectacle of the third world war*, the spectacle in which we live. Whereas the neo-dadaists speak of recharging Marcel Duchamp's earlier plastic refusal with (aesthetic) positivity, we are sure that everything that the world offers us today as positive can only serve to recharge limitlessly the negativity of the currently sanctioned forms of expression and in this manner constitute *the only representative art of this time*. The Situationists know that real positivity will come from elsewhere and that at the moment this negativity will help bring it about.

Above and beyond all pictorial preoccupations—and, we hope, even beyond anything that could recall subservience to a form of plastic beauty (which has been out of date for quite some time)—we have here traced a few perfectly clear signs.

The "directives"[4] exhibited on empty canvases or on a "detourned" abstract painting should be understood as slogans that one could see written on walls. The titles of certain paintings in the form of political proclamations obviously also convey the same sense of derision and take up the academicism currently in fashion that attempts to base itself on a painting of "pure signs" that are incommunicable.

The "thermonuclear maps"[5] are entirely beyond any of the laborious research toward "new figuration" in painting because they unite the most liberated procedures of action painting with a representation *that can lay claim to perfect realism* of numerous regions of the world at different hours of the next world war.

The "victory series"—that here again blends the greatest, ultra-modern lack of deference with a minute realism à la Horace Vernet—is involved in a revival of battle painting, but in a manner precisely opposite to that of Georges Mathieu and the retrograde ideological reversal on which he based his tiny publicity scandals.[6] The reversal that we are here aiming at corrects the history of the past, rendering it better, more revolutionary, and more successful than it ever was. The "victories" continue the optimistic and absolute *détournement* by means of which Lautréamont, quite audaciously, already disputed the validity of all manifestations of misfortune and its logic: "I do not accept evil. Man is perfect. The soul does not fall. Progress exists. . . . Up to now, one has described misfortune in order to inspire terror and pity. I will describe happiness in order to inspire the contrary. . . . As long as my friends are not dying, I will not speak of death."[7]

June 1963

Notes

1. In April 1963 the clandestine British group Spies for Peace published the illegal tract *Danger! Official Secret—RSG-6*, which exposed plans for the continuation of government during nuclear warfare. The SI's exhibition *Destruction of RSG-6*, held at the Galerie EXI, Odense, Denmark, in June 1963, was meant both as an homage to and extension of this action. For a full discussion of the Spies for Peace episode, see *The Raven* 6 (London: All Freedom Press, 1988).

2. "Geopolitique de l'hibernation," *Internationale situationniste* 7 (April 1962), pp. 3–10; citation, pp. 6–7. Compare the translation "Geopolitics of Hibernation" in Knabb, *Anthology*, pp. 76–82; citation, pp. 78 and 79. A number of ellisions made without any indication in Debord's citation have been noted as such in the present translation.

3. "Communication prioritaire," *Internationale situationniste* 7 (April 1962), p. 24.

4. As part of his contribution to *Destruction of RSG-6*, Debord produced five "directives," or programmatic slogans, which were hung on the walls.

5. As part of his contribution to the exhibition, J. V. Martin produced seven "thermonuclear cartographs" illustrating the effects of nuclear war: *Two Hours After the Start of the Third World War, 2h 15 After the Start of the Third World War, On the Second Day They Say There Will Be 82 Megabodies, Two Hours and Thirty Minutes After the Start of the Third World War, The RSG-6's Crematory: England, Two Hours Forty Minutes After the Start of the Third World War,* and *Whoever Won the War—We Lost It.*

6. As part of her contribution to the exhibition, Michèle Bernstein produced three collage constructions in which she turned historical revolutionary defeats into victories: *Victory of the Commune of Paris, Victory of the Spanish Republicans*, and *Victory of the Great Jacquerie in 1358.* These works were destroyed when the SI's headquarters in Denmark, J. V. Martin's house in Randers, was destroyed by arsonists in 1965.

7. Comte de Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse), *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Librarie José Corti, 1987), pp. 375, 387, and 395.

THE WORLD OF WHICH WE SPEAK

The new theory that we are constructing, despite the unusual or mad appearance it takes on in the eyes of contemporary conformism, is nothing other than the theory of a new historical moment that is already the present reality, a reality that can only be transformed through the progressive articulation of a precise critique. "Will theoretical needs be directly practical needs? It does not suffice for thought to seek its realization; reality must also seek thought" (*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*). One need only begin to *decipher* the news such as it appears at any given moment in the most popular press in order to obtain a quotidian X ray of Situationist reality. The means of this deciphering lie essentially in the *relationship* to be established between the facts and the coherence of various themes that thoroughly illuminate them. The meaning of this deciphering can be verified *a contrario* by emphasizing the incoherence of various thinkers that are currently taken all the more seriously the more miserably they contradict themselves from one detail to another within the generalized fraud.

THE TECHNOLOGY OF ISOLATION

In today's society, all aspects of technological development—and above all the means of so-called communication—serve to produce the greatest possible passive isolation of individuals as well as the control of these individuals by a "direct and permanent contact" that *operates in one direction only*, that is, by incitements (to which one cannot respond) that are broadcast by all sorts of *leaders*. Some applications of this technology go so far as to offer paltry consolations for that which is fundamentally lacking or even at times testify to the pure condition of this lack.

If you are a TV fanatic, you will definitely be interested in this newest, most extraordinary television set in the world: a TV that can go with you everywhere. Thanks to a totally new shape designed by the Hughes Aircraft Corporation in the USA, this television set is meant to be worn on the head. Weighing in at a mere 950 grams, it is actually installed on the type of headgear worn by pilots and telephone operators. Thanks to a mount, its tiny round screen made of plastic and reminiscent of a monocle is kept at a distance of four centimeters from the eye . . . You use only one eye to watch the image. With the other eye, according to the manufacturer, you can continue to look elsewhere, read, or engage in manual labor.

Journal du Dimanche, 29-7-62.[1]

The coal miner conflict has finally been resolved and work will probably resume again tomorrow. It is perhaps the feeling of having participated in the debate that explains the almost complete calm that has reigned continuously throughout the last thirty-four days in the miners' quarters and in the pitheads. In any case, television and transistor radios helped maintain this direct and permanent contact between the miners and their representatives. However, the same media also compelled everyone to go home at the decisive hours during which, on the contrary, only yesterday everyone would go out to meet at the union headquarters.

Le Monde, 5-4-63.

A new cure for lonely travelers at the Chicago train station. For a "quarter" (1.25 francs) a wax automaton shakes your hand and says "Hello pal, how are you? It's been great to see you. Have a good trip."

Marie-Claire, January 1963.

"I have no more friends; no one will ever talk to me again." These are the opening lines of the confession left on his own tape recorder by a Polish worker who had just turned on the gas in his kitchen. "I am almost unconscious, no one will save me anymore, the end is near"—these were Joseph Czternastek's last words.

A.F.P. [Agence France Presse], London, 7-4-62.

WORDS AND THOSE WHO EMPLOY THEM

"Words *work* on behalf of the dominant organization of life . . . Power merely provides words with a false identity card . . . It creates nothing, it recuperates" (*IS* 8 [January 1963, p. 29; compare Knabb, *Anthology*, p. 114]). The inversion of words is evidence of the disarming of the forces of the protest that depended on those words. The masters of the world thus seize signs, defuse them, and turn them upside down. Revolution, for instance, is a standard term in advertising vocabulary. This reaches its height in the formulation "Révolution en rouge—révolution avec Redflex" [Revolution in red—revolution with Redflex] cited by the journal *Der Deutsche Gedanke*. From Khrushchev to the priests, socialism as a concept has been given the richest variety of contradictory meanings ever consolidated in one single word. Unions have undergone such transformations that at this point the most effective strikes are those organized by the members of the privileged classes, as evidenced by the Belgian doctors this year. Not even anarchy has been spared, as one can tell from the "anarchist opinions" of the pro-Chinese Mr. Siné and, even more so, by the anarchist opinions of *Le Monde libertaire*.

The Duke of Edinburgh has just become a member of the Labour party's Congress of British Unions (TUC). In fact, the Screenwriters Guild, one of whose members is Queen Elizabeth's husband, has also just become part of the TUC.

Reuters, 17-4-64.

Since in formal terms the Khmer regime draws upon socialist terminology, its republican sovereign is called "Samdech Sahachivin," which means "comrade-prince."

Le Monde, 27-5-64.

We need to move back from Roman law to Negro-African law, from the bourgeois concept of landed property to the socialist conception of property which is that of traditional black Africa.

Léopold Senghor,
speech broadcast in Dakar, May 1964.

Some of the speakers could be heard expressing very serious reservations about the liberation of women. Others asserted in substance that the Algerian woman should be emancipated and reintroduced into the life of the nation, however, she must first be made to understand all of her duties and have a good knowledge of the Qur'an and of all the religious rules. In the economic and social resolution, one then reads: "A family code consistent with our traditions and our socialist line must be developed as quickly as possible."

Le Monde, 22-4-64.

One will be better able to distinguish the different tendencies that make up the fraction of the "socialist family" brought together on the occasion of conventions . . . The militant Christians participate fully in this family, but not without manifesting some annoyance since, as one of them put it, "they are tired of having to beg endlessly for a certificate of socialist baptism."

France-Observateur, 13-2-64.

He is an anarchist, if one is to take him at his word. He will confide this to you in a whisper and will even add "this is common knowledge" . . . His name is Siné and he has just returned from Cuba . . . "Do the workers have an understanding of the revolution?—No, and it would be best if they never acquired one either . . . Not capitalist prisons but revolutionary prisons. In the latter one is happy, almost too happy and (he adds, speaking to one of his interviewers) it would do you extremely well to go there." These are the anarchist opinions of Mr. Siné.

Le Monde libertaire, September 1963.

The inevitable accounts of Ravachol and the Bonnot gang, the standard fare of all the journalists that discovered anarchy in the *Ambigu* and the *Grand-Guignol*.

Maurice Joyeux,
Le Monde libertaire, January 1964.

Roles reserved for the Negro in the spectacle. I. Good Negro, in the Republic of South Africa, 1963.

"On Wednesday, President Johnson will open the New York World's Fair . . . a billion-dollar spectacle . . . On the other hand, the NAACP . . . has announced its plan to disrupt

LEISURE IS WORKING

With the development of leisure and of forced consumption, pseudo-culture and pseudo-games not only become expanding sectors of the economy—betting on horse races has become the fifth largest business in France in terms of turnover—but tend to be what *makes* the entire economy *run*, by representing the very objective of that economy. The *almost* complete fusion within the cultural spectacle of what is ordinarily considered "the best and the worst" inevitably tends toward this "worst." This is what gives the cultural spectacle its only meaning: a consumption of survival that goes so far as to prefer a socially forecast, planned, and guaranteed death. The avant-garde of capitalism is already speculating on consumption during death itself and encourages everyone to establish pensions in order to finally be able to enjoy the absolute in survival.

The Young Musicians Club of France, Club Med, the Friends of the Book Club, and the journal *Planète* have just joined together to form the Association of Frenchmen of the Twentieth Century. This association—constituted according to the Law of 1901 as not-for-profit and without religious or political affiliation—is open not to individuals but to groups wishing to participate in organized exchanges between different types of leisure organizations. In listening to the organizers of the four founding organizations, one might ask oneself what unites them besides strictly commercial interests. One of the four gave the following explanation: "We all work in a realm that is little known but continuously expanding, the realm of popular culture and leisure."

Le Monde, 22-2-64.

In the latest issue of the journal published by the Barclay Bank, one reads that the Beatles represent "an invisible export that

Roles reserved for the Negro in the spectacle. Il. Bad Negro, in Nebraska, 1919.

the opening ceremonies by asking three thousand of its members to drive to the fairgrounds with only just enough gas to get there." **Le Monde**, 22-4-64.

contributes significantly towards the equalization of the balance of payments in Great Britain."

Reuters, 25-2-64.

Many people love the Beatles because, so it is claimed, they express the authentic voice of the working class masses in Liverpool . . . But is the "Mersey sound" really what the Communist *Daily Worker* claims it to be, that is, a cry of revolt emanating from the eighty thousand slum dwellings housing three hundred thousand unemployed workers? . . . Even if they have retained and even emphasized the popular accent of their origins, the Beatles today speak to a much wider audience composed not only of the new working class, but also of the middle classes and all the beneficiaries of the society of abundance. And it is because they have clearly understood this evolution that their impresarios have advised them to wear clean clothes and to wash their hair.

Henri Pierre, *Le Monde*, 12-12-63.

The largest spectacle the world has ever seen, an investment of one billion dollars (of which ninety percent will have disappeared two years later without leaving the slightest trace), a fantastic collection of objects and living beings: from the Watutsi dancers that comprise the personal ballet of his majesty the King of Burundi (whose sacred drum had never before left its native land) to the most complicated electronic machines, from Michelangelo's *Pietà* to the capsule in which men are preparing to land on the moon. "*Peace through Understanding*" is the motto of the New York [World's] Fair that opens its doors on Wednesday . . .

Visitors to the fair will travel into the future in tiny cars. They will drive through the city of the future in which all traffic problems will be resolved, highways will be tunneled underground, the parking lots located on the ground floor, the stores on the first floor, the residential houses on the second, and the parks, wooded areas, and spaces

laden with plants on the third. A mere fantasy? The advertising agents of the powerful company retort that at the 1939 New York Exhibition, General Motors had already sketched a vision of highways, bridges, and underground passages that seemed fantastic at the time and have since become part of the reality of American life . . .

Coca-Cola . . . will offer the curious a "round-the-world tour" of a very special sort. Visitors will be able "*to feel, touch, and taste the most far-away places of the earth,*" and, what is more, they will be able to hear the most exquisite music and song as well as experiencing a multitude of other emotions. Of course, all these smells and all these tastes will be "synthesized" and controlled automatically by electronic brains . . .

The UAR [United Arab Republic] will try to gain the sympathies of the Americans by showing them the gold objects of the Pharaohs. General Franco will attempt to do the same by presenting paintings by old and modern masters from Vélasquez to Goya and from Picasso to Miró . . .

For art lovers there will be a huge exhibit of modern art and for the more scientifically minded there will be a pavilion housing recent discoveries. Nor have the female visitors been forgotten: in the Clairol pavilion every woman will be able to decide what she will look like in the following season—blonde, redhead, chestnut, brunette, and so on. Thanks to "*practical beauty*" machines they will be able to try on clothes "*in color.*" The pavilion will also be equipped with an electronic brain that will give good tips based on the physical data of each individual: what color she should choose for her powder, her lipstick, her eyeliner, her eyebrow pencil, her nail poilish, and so on.

Le Monde, 22-4-64.

Visit "Technology for Living." "Come see how you will be living in fifteen years." In the great room at Harrods, one of the most famous stores in London . . . "Why waste your time bringing wine to room temperature? Buy an 'electric room-temperaturizer': the button on the left for Bordeaux, the button on the right for Burgundy. The price: seven pounds" . . . "Technology for Living" is anticipation within hand's reach; an anticipation that one buys on credit with payments spread over twelve or twenty-four months . . . "Why have wallpaper on the walls?" the female vendor continues. "Hang up a heliorama instead (an electric painting with moving colors)."

France-Soir, 28-2-64.

Six prisoners in the Harris county jail in Texas, quite impressed by the official report on the ill effects of tobacco, announced yesterday that they had decided to quit smoking because they were determined not to die of lung cancer. The six men, imprisoned for various crimes, are all condemned to die in the electric chair.

U.P.I., Houston, 13-2-64.

Ettinger describes the refrigeration of the body as "the greatest promise—and perhaps the greatest problem—of history." Whatever may eventually happen—one should be practical—the American expert advises all those human beings who think ahead toward the future to specify in their wills if they want to be frozen, and to put aside money for their temporary death and for their second life. According to Ettinger's estimation, the sojourn in the refrigerated "dormitories" where the cadavers will be stacked (in the United States there will be fifteen million tons of them) will cost about two hundred dollars a year.

France-Soir, 17-6-64.

ABSENCE AND ITS COSTUMERS

As modern art increasingly tends toward a radical reduction of its means, towards silence, the products of this decomposition are required to be increasingly useful, are put on display and are "communicated" everywhere. This is due to the fact that this development in modern art expressed—and opposed—the noncommunication that has effectively established itself everywhere in society. The emptiness of life must now be furnished with the emptiness of culture. This is done using all possible sales strategies, particularly those that also serve almost everywhere else to pass off half-empty goods. To this end it is necessary to mask the real dialectic of modern art by reducing everything to a satisfying positivity of nothingness that justifies its own existence tautologically by the mere fact that it exists, which is to say

that it is granted recognition within the spectacle. Moreover, this self-proclaimed new art, down to its very details, turns out to be unabashedly the art of open plagiarism. The fundamental difference between an inventive modern art and the current generation is that what was previously anti-spectacular is now reiterated in a form both integrated into, and accepted within, the spectacle. This preference for repetition serves to eliminate all historical evaluation: now that a neo-dadism has become the official art of the United States, one goes so far as to reproach the dadaist [Kurt] Schwitters for recalling *his own epoch*. Indeed, even the critical form of writing known as *détournement* is subjected to a number of literary popularizations, with "references at the end of the volume." But the volume of cultural nothingness today guarantees a totally different end.

Long live nothing! You've perhaps heard of this gadget that caused a sensation in the United States last month, and which had the peculiarity of being useless. Well, you will be interested to learn that this extraordinary object—a cubical box encrusted with electric light bulbs that can light up in any direction—was such a success that it sold out completely and is impossible to find anymore. And yet the "Nothing Box" cost nearly forty dollars (more than 200 francs).

Elle, 8-2-63.

After each play, and particularly after this year's discovery *Oh! les beaux jours*, one wondered what new means or words Beckett could possibly still invent in order to materialize the nothingness and approach the silence that fascinate him. Yet the text of *Comédie* displays the very increase in sobriety that one no longer thought was possible.

Le Monde, 13-6-64.

One should know better: to buy a painting when it is love at first sight is dangerous. For a beginner, it is the worst way to start a collection. A battery of psychological tests has recently proven this: you can only become attached to a painting if it resembles you. In the Culture Boutique that puts these theories into practice, Marie-France Pisier, star of François Reichenbach's next film, was subjected to a barrage of questions posed by a psychologist: "Are you a glutton? Do you wear red? Do you sleep well?" and so on. The test is so convincing that Marie-France, at first attracted to a canvas by Singier, ultimately walked out of the boutique with a Soulages.

Marie-Claire, July 1963.

Mukaï, an important Japanese sculptor. His most famous work: a compressed Renault 4 CV car that now adorns one of Tokyo's train stations.

Elle, 9-8-63.

Captive Nature.

At Sarcelles, the landscape "reservation" magnanimously reconstituted by urban planners.

The organizer of a vacation club proposes the following quite seductive package for the month of January: "Eight days in the mountains for three hundred and fifty francs, everything included." When I first read this advertisement I did not find it very striking. It is the details of the "everything included" that make it extraordinary. The price includes not only air fare, a comfortable chalet, free stay for children under ten, and a kindergarten, but also "an encounter with a celebrity." For starters: Le Clézio.

Alfred Fabre-Luce, *Arts*, 1-1-64.

In large housing projects the theatrical space takes on a different meaning. It can no longer be a space and a stage constructed exclusively for dramatic performances. Formerly a total art form involving literature, painting, music, and architecture (not to mention lighting techniques), the theater is now considered as a space adaptable to the entire range of cultural presentations of the small town: dramatic art, cinema, television, music, lectures, dance . . . something like what the architect P. Nelson calls poetically a "leisure garden." This is what is at the root of the tendency, both in France and in the entire world, to build cultural centers.

Le Monde, 12-10-62.

The last four years have witnessed a veritable blossoming of a generation of musician-mathematicians throughout the entire world. Here in France research in this domain is refused substantive government subsidy, and is therefore reduced to the level of industrious craftsmanship more or less supported by the major producers of electronic machines . . .

The fruits of this research include, among others, the compositions *Variations triangulaires* by Michel Philippot and the *Nonetto in forma in triangolo* by Pierre Barbaud. The latter was also asked to provide the music for the film *Les abysses*. Without taking the slightest account of the images, he calculated the music on his Gamma 60, transcribed it in traditional notation, handed it over to the musicians, and recorded it. The reviews subsequently applauded the beauty of the score and its considerable contribution to the film's success.

In this manner the Gamma 60 today produces kilometers of harmonic exercises that are neither more ugly nor more beautiful than those produced in the conservatories, but infinitely more perfect in terms of their strict obedience to the rules! One can, by the way, even program the "tics" of past composers . . .

The imprecision of the stroke of a bow, indeed the instability of the sound emitted by the majority of today's instruments is not ideally suited to "realizing" the implacable logic generated by the machine. It seems that the supplementary use of an acoustic synthesizer is virtually indispensable in order to make the results of this research a true means of acoustic information.

It is clear, however, that "calculated" music has opened up a new era in terms of artistic creation. Our musician-researchers are already envisaging applying the best data provided by the electronic brains simultaneously to both music and the plastic arts. They are already living the (hopefully fertile) marriage of man and machine in the realm of spirit. They affirm loudly that the machine helps them "*to better conceive new structures.*" Let us here salute, together with Abraham Moles, the advent of the technological age.

France-Observateur, 21-5-64.

An agitated audience at the Théâtre de France the other night for the concert of the "Domaine" . . .

Next on the program was Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstück X*, the performance of which, by the same artist, looked like true forced labor. The soloist, armed with gloves, engaged in hand to hand combat with his Steinway for a number of rounds, some of them extremely short—a single chord, played very powerfully—and each separated by numerous and interminable silences, such that this *Klavierstück* really looked like a boxing match . . .

And yet behind all this experimentation there is nothing really new. The piano abused by punches? Already seen around 1926–1928 at a concert by the Revue musicale. And Kurt Schwitters's dadaism recalls that there were beautiful scandals provoked by Tristan Tzara around 1920.

Le Monde, 25-3-64.

This American presentation, an annex geographically outside the Biennale, is entirely devoted to the neo-dada protest movement known by the name of "Pop Art"; its appearance is a bit like that of an American festival in the margins of the official show.

Le Monde, 19-6-64.

I have not forgotten that I must discuss Jean-Pierre Faye's *Analogues*—a book that, it is true, does not call itself a novel . . . Nevertheless, what he wants to tell us is a story, even several stories. And I am perfectly willing to accept the fact that he embellishes his text with camouflaged citations from writers of the past, the references to which one only finds at the end of the volume.

Guy Dumur, *France-Observateur*, 18-6-64.

URBANISM AS WILL AND REPRESENTATION

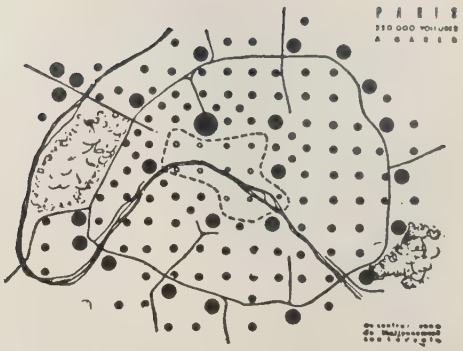
Modern capitalism—concentrated and highly developed capitalism—inscribes onto the scenery of life the fusion of what used to be opposed as the positive and negative poles of alienation: a sort of *equalizer of alienation*. One's obligatory stay there is supervised by an increasingly preventative police. The new cities are laboratories of this stifling society: from Vällingby in Sweden to Bessor in Israel where all forms of leisure are to be united in one single center, without forgetting the housing project in Avilès that signals the neo-capitalist development now reaching Spain. Simultaneously, the disappearance of the "urban jungle" that corresponded to free market capitalism—in all its lack of comfort, its luxury, and its adventures—continues apace. The center of Paris is radically restructured by the organization of automobile traffic: the quays transformed into highways, place Dauphine into an underground parking garage. This in no way precludes the complementary tendency to restore a few old urban spots as sites of touristic spectacle, a simple extension of the principle of the classical museum by means of which an entire neighborhood can become a *monument*. Administrative bureaucracies of all sorts construct everywhere buildings suited to their taste. At Canisy, this even includes the administration of a new activity that, despite its enormity, can be sold at a premium like all the charlatanry that responds to real lacks: the specialists of generalization.

In order to buy all this, one depends on one's credit; the monthly bills are sometimes a burden, but one pays them: the Frenchman—this is a new development—is willing to make sacrifices for his housing. Where do you live? In Paris, Marseille, Lille, Nantes, Toulouse? It makes little difference since wherever you are you will find the same lodgings, equally well equipped and well decorated. Whose home are you in? Whether it is the home of an office worker, a mason, a judge, or a skilled worker: the difference is imperceptible . . . In this way a style of life can be imposed that is clear, happy, uniform, and common to all social classes. I am conveying the things as they are without adding any political exegesis whatsoever. However, allow me to recall that in the previous century an abyss separated the bourgeois from the worker . . . Today, the salary of a skilled worker is close to that of a professor, and all of them end up in middle-income housing projects. Is this good? Is this bad? I leave the judgment up to you. But it is a fact that a levelling is underway, neither from above, nor from below, but at the middle.

Jean Duché, *Elle*, 10-5-63.

The thirty-second conference of the International Organization of Criminal Police (Interpol) began Wednesday morning in Helsinki, in the large amphitheater of the Economic Sciences Building . . . There are plans to create during the course of the conference a "bureau of criminal prevention" in each of the member countries similar to the one that has been in operation for a number of years in Stockholm. The purpose of this bureau is to provide architects, engineers, builders, and other specialists with the wide range of techniques developed and endorsed by the police in order to prevent criminal offenses.

Le Monde, 22-8-63.



The city of Canisy, an ideal thirty billion franc observatory for the market of grey matter . . . On a huge billboard located in a place called La Croix-Solier one reads: "International Center for Generalization. The first experimental scientific city, a site of synthesis and generalization between men of all disciplines." "All this comes from semantics," the mailman explains with a large sweeping gesture across the countryside.

L'Express, 22-8-63.

The Progress of Illness. In the "core-garage" project by Januz Deryng, "the parking lot dictates the urban planning"; cities are reconstructed around the parking cathedrals and each of the one hundred million Frenchmen that de Gaulle anticipates by the end of the century will find his car at its designated spot.

REFLECTIONS ON VIOLENCE

The revolt against existing conditions is manifest everywhere. It has not yet taken the form of an explicit project or an organization because *the position is still occupied* at the moment by the old, mystified, and mendacious revolutionary politics. This politics has failed—and has inverted into its own repressive opposite—because it was incapable of grasping the unacceptable and the possible in their totality. As evidenced by its contemporary ruins, revolutionary politics has been equally unable to define either the unacceptable or the possible because its practice failed and transformed itself into a lie. The revolutionary project can only be realized once again by means of excess; it needs a new maximalism that demands a *total* transformation of society. Kowa Shoitani's gesture is not absurd: a society can choose to invest its resources in the development of television stations, in medical research, or in other types of more unexpected research. "The eye has become the *human* eye just as the *object* has become a social, *human* object, which is to say produced by men for men . . . The *development* of the five senses is the work of all of past history" (Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*).

Today sports and idols draw the crowds that the political parties can no longer even dream of attracting. This is because for quite some time now the masses gathered together by politics were nothing but masses of passive spectators gaping at deceptive idols. However, these spectators that have succumbed to the contemplation of futile competitions also bring their dissatisfaction with them. In Lima, a mere falsification of the superficial spectacle was enough to awaken a radical refusal that revolted against the totality of spectacular falsification. This is what assures that the psychodrama will go bankrupt before it has fulfilled the stultifying function that its administrators expect of it.

In Clacton, gangs had it in for the local population, above all, the world of the adults. This manifested itself in the form of gratuitous acts of vandalism. In Morgate and Brighton they fought each other for various, obscure reasons . . . The presence of an "audience"—beginning with the mass of reporters and television cameramen, and also including the respectable adult tourists both terrified and attracted by the much reported violence—without a doubt played a role. As others have already observed, the youths presented themselves as spectacle . . .

Le Monde, 20-5-64.

A year ago, the black-jacket toughs of Serinette, a neighborhood in the suburbs of Toulon, decided to terrorize a seventy-year-old lady, Madame Hervé Conneau. A widow for quite a number of years, she lived alone in a comfortable house located

in the middle of a park, a residence that everyone in the area called "the castle." It was the park that first caught the attention of the young gang, since the foliage lent itself well for meetings and semiclandestine gatherings . . . Once they had occupied the park, the young thugs began to attack the castle itself. "One morning," the old lady recounts, "I noticed that they had levelled the chapel." There had been, in fact, a small, half-ruined chapel near the house: the "black jackets" had demolished it stone by stone during the night.

France-Soir, 10-5-64.

Jean-Marie Launay, born in Dreux (Eure-et-Loir), a young soldier from the 735th Munitions Company that guards a major depot near Thouars, had conceived of a plan to blow up the depot together with its thousands of tons of ammunition. Some friends who were supposed to come from Chartres in a stolen car would then have taken advantage of the ensuing panic to rob the vaults of the Place Lavault branch of the Banque Populaire, in the very center of Thouars.

Le Monde, 20-1-62.

Large numbers of arrests during the last few days. The Caen fair. Endless Brigitte Bardot films. The gangs from La Guérinière and Grâce-de-Dieu. The bus station. Girls doing strip-tease in basements. Deliquent minors turn up in court at age 20 . . . The V. family . . . occupy four rooms—three bedrooms and a salon with built-in kitchen—at La Guérinière. Mrs. V. . . . shows me the room: "You see, it has all the amenities: refrigerator, television, but he always insists on going out with his friends. Recently, they have been at the fair. I did not think that they would raise any trouble."

7 Jours de Caen, April 1964.

Around noon on Wednesday, the US ambassador to Japan, Mr. Edwin Reischauer, was stabbed in the right leg by a young nineteen-year-old Japanese man in the embassy courtyard. Although seriously wounded, the ambassador's life is not in danger . . . According to the Japanese police, the aggressor is an unstable youth whose action was not politically motivated. The nineteen-year-old, whose name is Kowa Shoitani, lives in Numazu, one-hundred-fifty kilometers southwest of Tokyo. By means of his action he wanted to call attention to the inadequate medical aid given to those suffering eye illnesses. According to the police report he is said to have declared: "I am short-sighted and it is because of the bad political situation caused by the American occupation that Japan does not provide facilities for people who suffer from problems of vision."

Le Monde, 25-3-64.

In Algiers at night, groups of slightly drunk men occasionally roam through the former rue d'Isly shouting out their list of demands: "Wine! Women!"

Daniel Guérin, *Combat*, 16-1-64.

The authorities are preparing to launch an operation against the young "black sheep" that are becoming increasingly numerous in the streets of the larger Algerian cities. On 1 December of last year, president Ben Bella already alluded to this "social blight." "We are going to take care of them," he announced. "The FLN is going to undertake a large operation to break their necks. We will make the necessary arrangements to send them to camps in the Sahara where they will break stones."

Le Monde, 18-12-63.

A young twenty-one-year-old man, Ryszard Bucholz, was condemned to death Saturday by the Warsaw court for having assaulted and seriously wounded a police officer together with two of his friends in the Polish capital last October 12 . . . The same day, Tadeusz Walcak, from the Wroclaw region, was also sentenced to death for using a hunting rifle to shoot and seriously wound two police officers and an army officer who had surprised him as he was in the process of robbing a store. The same sentence was handed down for Julian Krol, a resident of Warsaw, who had already previously been indicted for armed assault, this time for having seriously wounded with a pistol a police officer who had asked to see his identity papers . . . The extreme severity of these judgments seems to be due to the wave of gang violence and juvenile delinquence now raging in Poland.

A.F.P., Warsaw, 18-11-63.

Three "sadistic hooligans" were shot to death according to a communique from the attorney general of the Republic of Bulgaria. The statement emphasizes the extremely brutal manner in which the three thugs "attracted by the bourgeois mode of life" had accomplished their crimes.

A.F.P., Sofia, 11-4-64.

Three hundred and fifty dead and more than eight hundred wounded: this is the outcome of the soccer game in Lima yesterday in which Peru faced Argentina. The match, which was part of the pre-Olympic South American tournament, suddenly degenerated into a riot when the Uruguayan referee, Mr. Eduardo Pazos, in front of the forty-five thousand people that had gathered in the national stadium, disqualified the goal scored against his own team by the Argentinean Moralès . . . In the stands, the tension mounted by the second. Shortly thereafter, in view of the increasingly threatening crowd, the referee decided to stop the match, thereby giving the victory to the Argentineans by a score of 1 to 0.

Breaking down all the fences, hundreds of people then rushed onto the field. The police, completely overwhelmed, threw tear-gas grenades and fired shots into the air . . .

The real tragedy began, however, when the gates of the stadium were violently burst open. This caused a terrible and murderous crush. Thousands of people rushed out into the streets, smashing and trampling women and children. This human tide demolished everything in its way: cars were overturned and then set on fire and a number of buildings close to the stadium were invaded. A tire factory and the "Jockey Club" were set on fire as were two other houses and three buses . . . Soon thereafter, in the center of the city, groups of crazed fanatics began to pelt store windows with stones and set cars on fire.

France-Soir, 26-5-64.

CHOICE BETWEEN AVAILABLE MODELS OF REVOLUTION

Now that Stalinism has split into several rival currents that express the interests of bureaucracies at very different stages of economic and political development (Khrushchev, Mao, Togliatti), the reciprocal accusations are sufficiently revealing—both about those who formulate them and about those they are directed against—to render seemingly impossible any reference to the old positions (leftist, revisionist, and so on) of what was formerly the workers' movement because the minimum of cohesion necessary even within a mystification has been lost for too long. China wants atomic weapons, initiates a border conflict with Russia, vies with others for the destruction of Israel, flirts with Pakistan, France, and an Iraq that is simultaneously massacring those sympathetic to Moscow; most incredible, however, is that it has come to terms with the journal *Révolution* run by Vergès. Russia has already proven itself, as has Togliatti-Ercoli. The equilibrium between all these contenders is in the end the equilibrium of revolutionary falsification established for forty years and maintained by the common interests of the two camps. In the same fashion, the falsification was maintained during the era of monolithic Stalinism by the common interest of both the West and the East in proclaiming the East as the only known example of socialist revolution. The West manifested no weakness for the Stalinist revolution except perhaps the fact that it preferred it all the same to true revolution.

The new accusatory article published in Peking to denounce what it calls the "infamous deeds" of the Soviet leaders claims to be the first of a series that will be continued . . . "And at the critical moment when the Hungarian counter-revolutionaries had occupied Budapest, it (the leadership of the Russian Communist party) had had the intention, for a while, to adopt a strategy of capitulation and to abandon socialist Hungary to the counter-revolution." If one is to believe the Chinese document it is thanks to the intervention by Peking that the situation in Hungary was rectified and the harder line adopted.

Le Monde, 7-9-63.

At the conference of Afro-Asian solidarity in Algiers . . . the Chinese diatribe met with the approval of well over one-third of the participants . . . However, everyone had noticed the absence of any reference to France, whose activity in Gabon was not cited among the recent instances of imperialism in Africa.

Le Monde, 25-3-64.

In an article published by the Communist weekly *Rinascita*, Mr. [Palmiro] Togliatti writes that Mr. [Pietro] Nenni claims that everything will change in this country [Italy] when the Socialists come to power. "This is a crass and primitive argument," he asserts, "We would go so far as to call such a vision of power 'Stalinist.'"

A.P., Rome, 16-11-63.

THE LAST SHOW: THE PRIESTS OPEN THEIR BIG MOUTHS

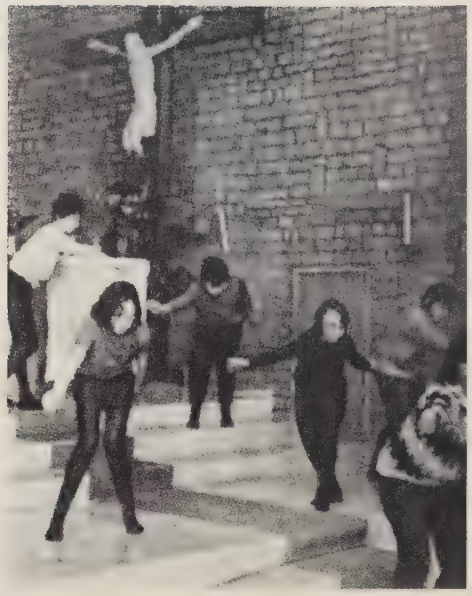
The church, having fought for so long against "spectacles" even as it maintained its monopoly on the social spectacle based on the divine otherworld, is struggling today for a place—limited but still important—within the spectacle of the century. It makes useful concessions, puts its pope-stars on center stage, and recuperates the lost architects of abandoned experiments in concentration-camp primitivism. The Priests' International is capable of making itself heard everywhere and in every sort of tone, be it as survivors of the inquisition or as parachutists into the wilderness of youth. This International also produces the frightening thalidomide thinkers of "red Christianity," Teilhardian mutants who can only live in incubators under a glass bell in the super-vacuum of contemporary leftist thought (see the examples in the sections "Words and Those Who Employ Them" and "Critique in Shreds"). It is surely obvious that there cannot have been any nonorthodox Christians since the end of those centuries during which the critique of the world had to be posed primarily in religious terms. Even before its ecumenical unification, all of Christianity is already unified on a theoretical level. The renunciation of the critique of religion is necessarily the culmination of the renunciation of all critique.

According to Mr. Simon Wiesenthal (the former director of the Documentation Center of the Association of Jews Persecuted by the Nazis) currently attending the Auschwitz trial, "the constructor of the cremation ovens in the camps is still alive in Austria and has recently built a church."

Le Monde, 7-3-64.

New York, 11 August 1963: Burger met a guy in a bar who offered him a drink and got him to talk about the problems in his life. When he finally discovered that he had been duped by a priest dressed to look like a normal person, Robert Burger killed him on the spot. The police are still puzzled as to the possible meaning of this exemplary act.

Robert Burger.



The Common Front of the Spectacles. In Father Léonard's church, near Brussels, the divine and the profane stages of the spectacular go hand in hand; young girls do the twist on the steps of the altar in order to bring the rockers back into the fold, come what may.

It was a big surprise when the pope announced on 4 December 1963, during the closing ceremonies of the second session of Vatican II, that he planned to travel to Palestine . . . Some Catholic circles and the entire Protestant world deplored the fact that this trip had had, here and there, some unexpected and annoying aspects. Could it not have been possible to avoid the many disorderly demonstrations and the excessive American-style publicity campaign? And even if one acknowledges the importance of structuring the festivities in a popular fashion, could these not have been protected from the barrage of publicity technology? Too many photographers, too many filmmakers.

Le Monde, 20-6-64.

Ermanno Olmi plans to make a film about Pope John XXIII. The filming is set to start at the end of the summer. To show the pope, the director plans to use images from documentaries as he is reluctant to confide the role to an actor.

A.F.P., Rome, 9-5-64.

In France, the churches are careful to delay the religious services on Sundays so as not to overlap with the horse races . . . since between 10 and 12 A.M. three million Frenchmen are holding their betting tickets in hand.

Week-End, 22-2-64.

"God, who created our beaches, did not intend for them to become the sites of orgies, where half-naked men and women in bikinis, lacking both morality and prudery, offend our children's innocent gaze, igniting the flames of their sexual instinct." So writes the Honorable Antonio, the bishop of the Canary Islands, in a thundering pastoral letter.

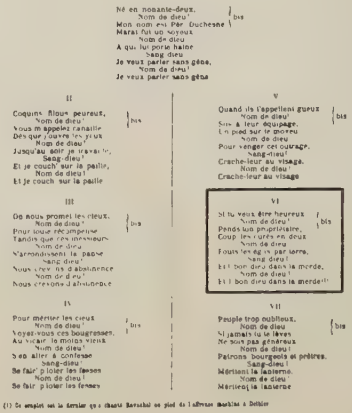
France-Soir, 10-5-64.

L'BON DIEU DANS LA MERDE

(LE PÈRE DUCHESNE)

Chant de Guillotine de Ravachol

GOUALE A MONTBRISON LE MATIN DE SON EXECUTION



The Sufficient Grounds for the Mulelists.

One of the nuns of the Holy Family who witnessed the massacre of the three oblate monks in the Kilembe mission arrived in Léopoldville Friday during the course of the afternoon. It was with tears in her eyes that she responded to the questions posed to her. "The villagers of Kilembe attacked the mission, armed with machetes, knives, and guns. Some of them wore helmets painted red like those worn in Stan-

leyville by the Gizenguist forces. The monks were killed with the machetes. Following the departure of the villagers, we buried the remains."

Le Soir, 26-1-64.

Time is pressing . . . there are 142 churches to be built. This immense project is due solely to the generosity of the Parisians. May everyone also boldly add their efforts to those of our "church builders." Who could refuse to carry their stone to the cardinal's construction sites?

Appeal by Cardinal Feltin, on 23-4-64.

In numerous cities in central England and in the suburbs of London there were renewed skirmishes Saturday between the two rival gangs of young English thugs: the "Mods" and the "Rockers." Nearly 100 arrests were made. On the other hand, the "Rockers" helped a pastor dressed in a leather jacket and motorcycle gear to distribute posters for the campaign against hunger; on Trafalgar Square they received the blessing of brother Austen Williams, the vicar of the local church.

France-Soir, 26-5-64.

CRITIQUE IN SHREDS

An entire generation of leftist thinkers forced into retreat can only conceive of exhibiting itself as the caricatural image of *submission*. This takes one of two forms: either they offer themselves up to some promising reheated Stalinism (usually of a Chinese sort) in order to satisfy the same religious masochism of the martyr delightfully ridiculed and rejected by what he worships and is not meant to understand. Otherwise they marvel at the splendors of the technocratic success offered them, a success all the more merited and quickly achieved the more subtle and *detailed* their critique of the dominant social order. In order to improve and render eternal its own operation, this dominant order will then extract the best part of the critique that will modify it step by step in both a revisionist and revolutionary manner. The wages of idiocy immediately exhibited by these *managers of criticism*, of a gimmick-critique, are themselves already the best victory of the oppressive and stultifying system. [Serge] Mallet, the eulogist of the Loire-Atlantic, is totally moved to discover in the most recent compilation of mush by André Gorz a number of banal truths that have been expressed for years by all the avant-garde movements—or perhaps simply by [John Kenneth] Galbraith. His technocratic pride then swells so far that he publicly praises participation in the leading economic spheres, and loudly faults the primitivism on the part of Engels who supposedly did not dare to acknowledge his well-being. And [Paul] Cardan, when he is not organizing votes for or against the meaning of the Realm of God, presents to his movement (whose mission is to "recommence the revolution") the very same anti-Marxist and grossly falsifying platform that was proclaimed by the professors of philosophy in 1910.

Although the members of the A.P.F.C. [Franco-Chinese Peoples' Association] cannot but hope for recognition from the representatives of China, they are sufficiently lucid not to get annoyed if and when the answer is "no." They are also big enough not to plunge into despair if Peking, like *l'Humanité*, drags them into the mud. What is most important for them is less the success of their little project of a Franco-Chinese Peoples' Association, but rather some kind of a Franco-Chinese association of a similar sort.

Claude Cadart,
France-Observateur, 13-2-64.

Influenced by the theories of "group dynamics" in modern sociology, the directors of associations in Paris and Lyon perceive these as a means of reducing the isolation of students that is particularly severe during the first year of study. By organizing themselves on their own, the students would be led to an awareness of their problems and also of their demands . . . Congress has approved the creation of research centers, both on the national level and within local associations, that will bring together the members of the UNEF [National Association of French Students] and of the Support Organization of French Students for the purpose of "studying the possibility of rendering students more sensitive to their problems by means of a study carried out in the form of participant observers."

Le Monde, 13-4-63.

In 1958, [André] Gorz still knew nothing about the reality of the world of today's worker or indeed of economic reality as such . . . Luckily for him, and for us, he had to earn his living, which he did by writing a financial column for a major weekly paper, something which, I imagine, did not correspond with his initial aspirations. But after all, if Engels had not been forced in 1844 to give up his life as a freelance civil intellectual in order to devote himself to "the bitch of commerce," he would certainly never have gained the slightest understanding of political economy and would never have helped the young Hegelian, his friend Marx, discover it.

Philosophical analysis, once it has rediscovered the purposivity of labor relations, helps the political theorist free himself from false dilemmas of the sort "reform or revolution" . . .

To struggle against integration means to struggle "to get control of the data that form the basis of administrative politics, to anticipate the decisions of the employers and propose at every step one's own alternative solution." Through such means one criticizes capitalist administration much more effectively than by any "protest speeches" . . . The struggle to create a new model of consumption, which starts by making capitalism pay the price of social facilities, strikes Gorz as one of the most important links in the chain of revolutionary reformism that he advocates, a reformism that aims at depriving capital little by little of its economic power.

Serge Mallet,
France-Observateur, 21-5-64.

Editorial note: it is hardly necessary to point out that for almost all of the members of *Socialisme ou barbarie* the "Realm of God" is effectively meaningless, but that they do not consider this a reason to prevent another comrade who is of a different opinion from expressing himself on this issue.

Socialisme ou barbarie,
no. 36, April 1964 (p. 85).

The Marxist theory of history . . . is ultimately based on the hidden postulate of an essentially unchangeable human nature whose overriding motivation is an economic one.

Paul Cardan,
Socialisme ou barbarie, no. 37, July 1964.

SKETCH OF A MORALITY WITHOUT OBLIGATION OR SANCTION

"The only primary material that has not been subjected to experiments in our experimental epoch is the *freedom* of spirit and of action" (*IS* no. 8 [January 1963, p. 9]). The unity of the world manifests itself in the unity of today's oppressive conditions: its crisis is also a unitary crisis. This fundamental unity of alienation is expressed in *segregations*, in divisions, in *incoherences*, and in exacting surveillance (to the extent that ideologies are becoming weaker and must "program" every detail of life in increasingly greater doses, the surveillance of art simultaneously and necessarily becomes part of the general surveillance of power). The coherence of freedom and the coherence of oppression both require as the *first step* the unmasking of all personal incoherence since the latter functions as the shelter and the technology of the enemies of freedom. One example: the five loves of the Chinese student clearly convey the message "work-family-country," here supplemented with the love of the boss (called "the people"). Raymond Borde, for years the "good Stalinist" protected by the surrealists, has now de-Stalinized himself to such an extent that he has published a pamphlet *(L'Extricable)* that mixes surrealism and rather conventional literary humor with a few more contemporary remarks. Borde makes no secret of the fact that work and family make him vomit and that he places his hopes solely in the simultaneous realization of revolution and eroticism. The same Borde is simultaneously a militant supporter of China. So who is the idiot? Who draws the conclusions from this?

The Cape Town tribunal has issued warrants for the arrest of a thirty-five-year-old white South African musician, Stanley Glasser, and a twenty-six-year-old mulatto

singer, Maud Damons, charged for infringing the Immorality Act that forbids sexual relations between whites and blacks or mulattos. The accused couple have fled into the British protectorate of Bechuanaland from which they will be able to reach Tanganyika.

Le Monde, 6-1-63.

As of recently, the youth in Denmark have their own bars, off-limits to adults, which are called "Pops," a variation on the English word "pub." One can drink cocktails there, but all of them consist primarily of milk. A discotheque plays the latest hits. The young Danes can hang out there from ten in the morning until ten at night. There are already three such establishments open in Copenhagen, all of them extremely successful. Boys and girls meet there to talk, do their homework, and above all just enjoy being amongst themselves.

France-Soir, 6-5-64.

I am not only qualified to answer questions concerning industry and agriculture; I am also qualified to answer questions about culture because I am the president of the Republic and the general secretary of the Communist League.

Tito, *Nasa Stempa*, February 1963.

The Soviet literary press recently had to protest against the invocation of Law No. 273 against a would-be [Eugene] Yevtushenko, the poet [Joseph] Brodsky, who was accused of leading a bohemian life. The law was adopted in 1961 by the Supreme Soviet in order to combat social parasitism and idleness.

L'Express, 25-6-64.

The proposition to replace the current identity card (incorrectly called a "passport" as it is only valid within the USSR) with a work ledger, encountered a wide response in the Soviet press, which has published a number of readers' letters supporting the project. The new work ledger, which has become a "work passport" that everyone would have to carry with them, will contain much more detailed information than the older card. This data will include the bearer's diplomas, the stages of his career as a worker, his movements from one firm to another, his moral and professional conduct, his "social activities" during his leisure time, etc.

Such discrimination seems to have met with the sincere approval of an important category of readers who write to newspapers: elderly and middle aged workers, particularly those that have been working for a long time in the same firm. For them the project has its advantages. According to the commentaries in the press those workers with good work passports would have priority over others for housing, the best vacations, the best social security rates, in trials and other sorts of disputes, and so on. A reader of *Troud* writes: "It would not be a bad idea for engaged women to cast a glance at the work passport of their future husbands. Good workers also make good heads of families."

France-Observateur, 12-3-64.

A number of these activities are not essentially different from those classically organized by the administrative machinery of the Komsomol. According to the Soviet press, they are characterized by the fact that the young "communards" themselves determine the rules. Moreover, the "young communard clubs" organize "open heart meetings" where they discuss the attitude of each of the participants toward the group . . . These initial steps toward self-government are somewhat reminiscent—at least superficially—of certain explorations in the same direction undertaken by Western "psychosociologists."

France-Observateur, 4-6-64.

A Chinese peasant who had himself sterilized "in order to consecrate all his energies towards the construction of socialism in China," was warmly congratulated in public by Mr. Chou En-lai—so reports the 1 September issue of the bimonthly *Jeunesse communiste*, the organ of the League of Young Communists . . . In general both *Jeunesse communiste* and *Le journal de la jeunesse*, the other organ of the League of Young Communists, devote a rather considerable amount of space to the issue of birth control and advise their readers who absolutely do not want to remain single to get married as late as possible . . .

The League of Young Communists also publishes large numbers of letters from young people of both sexes announcing their decision to remain single and chaste.

La Monde, 18-9-63.

Moral, civic, and political education is irregular in primary schools. It arises from the example of the teachers, from the lifestyle of the school (that is, an environment devoid of punishment), from a sort of religion of work through which politeness and morality are continuously conveyed by all activities without any explicit lessons on the subject. The task of the primary school teacher is to inculcate in a practical manner "the five loves": love of the people, of the country, of work, of national property, and of parents.

Désiré Tits, *Lettre de Chine*
(distributed by the Belgium-China Association, 1963).

The Minister of the Interior has asked the police chiefs to remind the mayors that they do not have the right to authorize the wearing of the "monokini." This bathing suit, Mr. Frey went on to say, constituted a public offense against the sense of decency, punishable according to article 330 of the penal code. Consequently, the police chiefs must employ the services of the police so that the women who wear this bathing suit in public places are prosecuted.

Le Monde, 25-7-64.

"I MUST ADMIT THAT EVERYTHING CONTINUES" (HEGEL)

The refusal of life in its present arrangement characterizes, to different degrees, the blacks in Africa and the rebellious youth "without a cause" in Scandinavia; the Asturian miners who have effectively been on strike almost continuously for two years, and the Czechoslovakian workers. The "festive atmosphere" of the strike in Lagos was also evident in January 1961 in southern Belgium or in Budapest. *Everywhere* one hears posed the obscure question of a new revolutionary organization that has a sufficient grasp of the dominant society for it to be able to function effectively and at all levels *against* the dominant society: to be able to *detourn* it in its entirety without *reproducing* it in any form, "a sunrise that, in a flash, depicts all at once the form of the new world."

A commando of young Argentine Communists made a breakthrough in the realm of pirate broadcasting: the first pirating of an electronic billboard advertisement! Armed with revolvers, five young men burst into the offices of the Argentine electronic billboard company yesterday and forced the operators to broadcast Communist propaganda in the heart of downtown Buenos Aires.

Paris-Presse, 10-1-63.

Three young French students, accused of acts of terrorism, were condemned by a military tribunal this Thursday in Madrid to prison terms ranging from fifteen years and one day to thirty years. The young Frenchmen had been arrested last April. Mr. Alain Pecunia, a seventeen-year-old graduate and former student at the Lycée Janson-de-Sailly, was sentenced to two prison terms of twelve years and one day each for having placed a small bomb on the boat *Ciudad-de-Ibiza* in Barcelona. Bernard Ferry, a twenty-year-old student at the art academy in Aubervilliers, was sentenced to thirty years in prison for having placed an explosive in front of the airline offices of Iberia in Valencia, slightly injuring two children. Guy Batous, a twenty-three-year-old stu-

Clandestine Tract in Spain. "There's nothing better than sleeping with an Asturian miner. Now there you have real men!"

dent of philosophy from Villefranche-sur-Saône, who had been arrested in Madrid and found to be in possession of a bomb, was sentenced to fifteen years in prison.

Le Monde, 14-8-63.

The dock workers in Aarhus and in Odense refused, one after the other, to unload the South African peanuts transported by the German freight ship *Brunchsberg*. In order to unload its cargo the vessel was forced to go to Hamburg, from which point the nuts will be transported to Denmark by truck. In Copenhagen one is of the opinion that this most recent incident will generate a dispute similar to the one adjudicated in July: in this latter case, the dock workers who had refused to unload the Swedish ship *Lommaren* under similar circumstances were all forced to pay fines.

Le Monde, 14-8-63.

In Columbia, three battalions of the Columbian army are advancing toward Marquetalia—a region that is entirely under the control of Communist elements and constitutes a sort of "independent republic" at the heart of the Columbian territory—in order to reestablish the authority of the State. This region, whose name does not appear on any map, comprises an area of five thousand square kilometers. It is located between the states of Tolima and Huila.

Le Monde, 21-5-64.

A detachment of two hundred marine soldiers had taken up position today in front of the Union of Metalworkers in Rio de Janeiro in order to evict 1,500 mutinous sailors and leading seamen. After the minute of silence that followed their arrival, the leader of the "mutineers," a small, twenty-five-year-old sailor, called out from the top of the barricades: "Comrades, I know you, I know that your greatest desire is to come and join us." He then gave a signal with his hand and the 1,500 rebels began to sing as a chorus "The White Swan," the national marine hymn. One marine soldier with a very striking northeastern appearance broke ranks, undid his belt, threw down his weapons, and entered the building. One hundred and ninety-four of his colleagues went on to repeat his gesture. At this point it became clear that the rebellion of the sailors would have grave consequences.

Le Monde, 3-4-64.

Since last spring *Zengakuren* has organized a series of demonstrations against the stationing in Japanese ports of American atomic submarines armed with *Polaris* missiles. The protests were also directed at the same time against the Japanese government, which had decided to tolerate the *Polaris* missiles as part of a strategy aimed at providing Japan with nuclear arms. One of the most serious difficulties of this struggle stems from the fact that the Japanese Communist party tries to seize every opportunity to transform the struggle into an anti-American movement, which is to say a nationalist and patriotic campaign against "the occupation and the domination of Japan by the United States." Another difficulty arises from the workers' movement, whose leadership, controlled as it is by the Socialist party, always transforms the objectives of other protests into the current struggles of the workers. Despite these difficulties, demonstrations were held throughout Japan by the students of *Zengakuren*, who had also protested against the Japanese-Korean negotiations, the Chinese preparations for a nuclear explosion, and the French experiments in Tahiti . . . On 13 September in Tokyo, a few hundred students protested in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Toru Tagaki, the vice-president of *Zengakuren*, was arrested during the demonstration.

Zenshin (International Edition), November 1963.

In the Congo, Hell's Angel types are burning the missions . . . These groups have from three to seventy members whose ages range from fourteen to twenty. They are dressed in shorts and are armed with bow and arrows, machetes, and sometimes spears. They sleep during the day in the forest and then meet at twilight at a previously arranged point. They move around by foot, running at moderate speeds, and can strike at places very distant from each other. Each group has its own president, secretary, and leading officer . . . Their *leader*, Pierre Mulele, is said to have studied guerilla warfare in Egypt and China. He used to be close to Patrice Lumumba, the head of the Congolese government who was assassinated in 1961. The groups of youths are profoundly superstitious. They speak constantly of miniature airplanes in which their leaders travel at night and which can instantaneously transport a man from one location to another. The groups often cover a distance of thirty to fifty kilometers in one night. They largely exaggerate their own mobility . . . Amongst themselves, they call each other "comrade," and are continuously proclaiming their own honesty: "We are not thieves" . . . This seems to merit comparison with the discomfort that afflicts youths under twenty all over the world.

Observer, 19-4-64.

On the first of May students demonstrated in Prague . . . The events that took place Friday were the result, according to official accounts, of insignificant factors and were not due to politics. Some people with nothing to do, "hooligans," wanted to sing, and honest passersby, having overheard the noise, observed them with curiosity or expressed their reprobation. The dispatches of the Western press agencies, on the other hand, claim that the demonstrations were directed by college and high school students who were protesting against party politics . . . The Czechoslovak press agency C.T.K. confirmed that the incidents had taken place but did everything it could to play down their importance: ". . . At the two sites mentioned, the crowd did not exceed 1,500 people. The security forces were able to reestablish order with the help of the spectators. A total of thirty-one demonstrators were arrested, among them five young women."

Le Monde, 5-5-64.

Particularly in Lagos there reigned a very curious atmosphere, very different from the atmosphere of a European city on strike. The dominant emotion was one of joy, a feeling of festivity. The employees that earn seven pounds a month (a police dog costs fifteen pounds) discovered all that they were capable of. This gave them such a sense of satisfaction that the entire movement took place in an extraordinarily good mood . . .

E.-R. Braundi, *France-Observateur*, 9-7-64.

The blacks are getting organized on their own. According to a detective, certain rioters are carrying small portable radio transmitters that enable them to convey information about the movements of the police forces. M. Epton, the president of the Harlem "defense council" that was created two weeks ago, revealed that his organization is divided into cells. This grid pattern is designed to "help people to defend themselves against the police." The "defense council" had posters printed on which the phrase "Wanted for Murder" is placed below a photograph of the police officer Gilligan who recently shot a young black man.

Le Monde, 26-7-64.

Monkey skin, duck feathers, palm leaves, and fake flowers taken from cemeteries seem to me to constitute the principal elements of the uniform of the Mulelists. Fantasy is not excluded, however, and so Brillo pads, typewriter ribbons, and Christmas tree balls can also make for elegant finery . . .

At this moment one of the "Simbas" [*simba*: Swahili, "lion"] standing guard spies two Europeans taking a bit of fresh air on the second floor balcony. He shouts at them in French, carried away by his own power:

"Don't you know that you have been summoned? All right then, come down here or else I'll shoot! Brothers, this is revolution!"

The two whites obey. We all look at each other: the light-hearted tone of an urbane conversation which we had effected had suddenly peeled off like a varnish, leaving behind only a permanent, insidious unease similar to a depression.

"They are playing," someone tells me sadly, "they are constantly playing, even when they kill."

Y.-G. Bergès,
"8 Jours chez les étranges rebelles du Congo," *France-Soir*, 4-8-64.

Notes

1. Throughout the translation the European dating system employed in the original text has been used, rather than the American style. Hence all dates should be read as day-month-year (e.g., 10-6-89 stands for 10 June 1989).

Guy Debord

On Wild Architecture

It is known that initially the Situationists wanted at the very least to build cities, the environment suitable to the unlimited deployment of new passions. But of course this was not easy and so we found ourselves forced to do much more. And during the entire course of events various partial projects had to be abandoned and a good number of our excellent capacities were not employed, as is the case—but how much more absolutely and sadly—for hundreds of millions of our contemporaries.

On a hill overlooking the Ligurian coast, Asger Jorn has now slightly modified a few old houses and is building a garden to link all of them to each other. What more peaceful commentary could there be? We have become famous, we are told. But our time, which has not yet discovered all of its capacities, is also far from having granted recognition to all of our people. Asger Jorn has done so much, here and there, that many people do not know that above all he was a Situationist, the permanent heretic of a movement that cannot tolerate any orthodoxy. Nobody contributed as much as Jorn did to the origin of this adventure: he found people throughout Europe, he came up with so many ideas, and even in the most cheerful poverty he often found the means to pay off the most urgent debts that we had accumulated at the printers. The fifteen years that have passed since the meeting at Cosio d'Arroscia have indeed begun to change the world, but not our intentions.

Jorn is one of those people who is not changed by success but rather who continuously changes the stakes of success. He is the opposite of those who, at one time, built their careers on the repetition of a single, worn-out artistic gag; he is also the opposite of those who, more recently, claim to establish their generally imaginary quality by the mere affirmation of a revolutionary stance that is both total and totally unemployed. Instead, Asger Jorn did not hesitate to intervene, on even the most modest scale, on all terrains that were accessible to him. At one point he was one of the first to undertake a contemporary critique of that most recent form of repressive architecture, a form that to this day is like oil stains on "the frozen waters of egotistical calculation," and whose tenants and supporters can thus be judged everywhere case by case. And in this Italian dwelling complex, Jorn once again lends a hand and responds to even the concrete question of our appropriation of space, demonstrating that everyone could undertake to reconstruct around themselves the earth, which badly needs it. The painted and sculpted sections, the never-regular stairs between the different levels of ground, the trees, the added elements, a cistern, vines, the most varied sorts of always welcome debris, all thrown together in a perfect disorder, compose one of the most complicated and, ultimately, one of the best unified landscapes that one can traverse in the space of a fraction of a hectare. Everything finds its place there without difficulty.

For anyone who has not forgotten the conflicted and passionate relations and has necessarily remained quite distant from both Situationists and architecture, this must appear to be a sort of inverse Pompei: the relief of a city that was not built. Similarly Umberto Gambetta's collaboration on all aspects of the work gives it, if not the character of a collective game (whose capacities for the overcoming of the separation between culture and daily life were exposed by Jorn), then at least the bare minimum.[1]

The "Facteur Cheval," more of an artist, constructed a monumental architecture on his own;[2] the king of Bavaria had greater means. Among other things and in passing, Jorn sketched a type of village awkwardly confined to the surface of such a little "private property," a creation that bears witness to what one can begin to do "with a little time, luck, health, money, thought (and also) good mood . . . ," as formulated by Ivan Chtcheglov, another one of those who laid down the foundations of the Situationist movement.

Good mood was, in any case, never missing from Situationist scandal even at the very center of so many ruptures and violent acts, of incredible claims and unstoppable strategies. Those who love to ponder in vain what history might have been—of the sort: "It would have been better for mankind if those people had never existed"—will be wondering for quite a while about the following amusing problem: could one not have appeased the Situationists around 1960 by means of a few lucidly conceived recuperative reforms, that is, by giving them two or three cities to construct instead of pushing them to the edge and forcing them to unleash into the world the most dangerous subversion there ever was? But others will surely retort that the consequences would have been the same and that by conceding a little to the Situationists—who had even then never intended to be satisfied with just a little—one would have only increased their requirements and their demands and would have only arrived even faster at the same result.

September 1972

Notes

1. Umberto Gambetta was the caretaker of Albisola.

2. Ferdinand Cheval (1836–1924), French amateur architect and rural mailman in Hauterives (Drômes), between 1879 and 1912 built single-handedly a strange palace whose delirious baroque character is reminiscent of both the "naive" painting of Henri Rousseau in its integration of the exotic, and of "art brut" in its symbolic and plastic inventiveness. A photograph of André Breton (for whom the Facteur Cheval was very important) in front of the Palais Idéal can be found in Breton's *Les vases communicants* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), p. 163. And as Troels Andersen points out, in the archives of the Silkeborg Museum can be found a photograph of Guy Debord standing in front of the same edifice, under an inscription that reads "where the dream becomes reality."

SITUATIONIST DATA (CHRONOLOGY)

Jean-Jacques Raspaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	The journal *Internationale situationniste* is the central organ edited by the sections of the Situationist International up to and including #8. Starting with issue 12, it becomes the journal of the French section.
1956		September					Alba (Conference)	x			Gil J Wolman (Lettrist International/*Potlatch*); Asger Jorn, Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio, Piero Simondo, Elena Verrone (Imaginist Bauhaus); Constant (ex-COBRA); [Ettore] Sottsass [Jr.] and one or two unknown people (without any specific affiliation); Enrico Baj (from the Nuclear Art movement, Milan) immediately excluded from the conference upon the insistence of the Lettrist delegate.
1957	1/27	July			1		Cosio d'Arroscia (Unification conference)	x			FOUNDING: [Ralph] Rumney (London Psychogeographic Committee); [Michèle] Bernstein, [Guy-Ernest] Debord (Lettrist International/*Potlatch*); Jorn, [Walter] Olmo, Pinot-Gallizio, Simondo, Verrone (Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus).

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
1958	1/27	January 25–26			2		Paris	x		x	Bernstein, Debord, Jorn, [Abdelhafid] Khatib, Pinot-Gallizio. Olmo, Simondo, Verrone.
	1/27	January 1		T			Munich				*Nervenruh! Keine Experimente!* (Calm your nerves! No experiments!), first manifesto by the German section.
	1/28	March								x	Rumney.
	1/27	no date		T			Paris				*Nouveau théâtre d'opérations dans la culture* (New theater of operations within culture), tract by the French section.
	1/27	no date		T			Paris				*Aux producteurs de l'art moderne* (To the producers of modern art), tract by the French section.
	1/29	April 12		T			Brussels				SCANDAL. [Walter] Korun prosecuted. Tract: *Adresse de l'Internationale situationniste à l'Assemblée générale des critiques d'art* [Address by the Situationist International to the General Assembly of Art Critics].
	1/27	May		B			Turin				Italian edition of *Rapport sur la construction des situations* (Report on the construction of situations).
	2/27	May 30		E			Turin	x			Exhibition of industrial painting: Pinot-Gallizio, [Giors] Melanotte.
	2/27	June		T			Turin				Tract by Bernstein: *Elogio di Pinot-Gallizio* (In praise of Pinot-Gallizio).
	1/27	no date		A			Brussels				Article by Korun on the SI in *Gard Sivik* 11.
	1/27	no date		B			Brussels				Second French edition of *Rapport sur la construction des situations.*
	1/27	no date		A			Brussels				Article by Korun and Jorn in *Kunst Meridaan.*
		June	1				Paris				Editorial board: [Mohamed] Dahou, Pinot-Gallizio, [Maurice] Wyckaert.
	1/27	June		Bk			Paris				Jorn publishes *Pour la forme* (In defense of form).
	2/29	July 4		T			Milan				Van Guglielmi SCANDAL. Tract by the Italian section: *Difendete la liberta ovunque* (Defend freedom wherever you are).
	2/29	July 7		T			Paris				Jorn publishes *Au secours de van Guglielmi* (To the rescue of van Guglielmi).

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
	2/27	July 8		E			Milan	x			Exhibition of industrial painting: Pinot-Gallizio, Melanotte.
	2/27	July		L			Turin				Statement by Jorn on industrial painting.
	2/27	July 8		T			Milan				Republication of Bernstein's text *Elogio di Pinot-Gallizio.*
	2/12	Autumn								x	Korun is relieved of his functions.
	3/16	November		T			Munich				*Erklärung von Amsterdam* (Explanation of Amsterdam) by Constant and Debord. Internal document.
	3/16	November		T			Munich				*Thesen über die Kulturelle Revolution* (Theses on the cultural revolution) by Debord. Internal document.
		December		Bk			Copenhagen				Debord and Jorn publish *Mémoires.*
		December	2				Paris				Editorial board: Dahou, Jorn, Wyckaert.
		no date		A			Amsterdam				In the journal of the Stedelijk Museum, Debord publishes *Dix ans d'art expérimental: Jorn et son rôle dans l'invention théorique* (Ten years of experimental art: Jorn and his role in theoretical invention).
1959	3/17	February								x	[Hans] Platschek.
	3/16	March		A			Amsterdam				*Résolution contre la restauration de la bourse d'Amsterdam* (Resolution against the restoration of the Amsterdam stock exchange). Article by the Dutch section.
	3/19	April 17–20			3		Munich	x			Armando, Constant, Debord, [Ervin] Eisch, [Heinz] Höfl, Jorn, Melanotte, [Har] Oudejans, Pinot-Gallizio, [Heimrad] Prem, [Gretel] Stadler, [Helmut] Sturm, Wyckaert, [Hans-Peter] Zimmer.
	3/22	April 20		T							*Ein Kultureller Putsch während Ihr schlaft!* (A cultural putsch while you sleep!). Tract.
		April		F			Paris				Beginning of the filming of *Sur le passage de quelques personnes à travers une assez courte unité de temps* (On the passage of a few people through a rather brief moment in time).
	3/19	no date					Amsterdam				Founding of the bureau of unitary urbanism in Amsterdam.

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
	3/16	April		L			Amsterdam				Tape-recorded lecture by the Dutch section at the Academy of Architecture.
	3/16	June		L			Amsterdam				Tape-recorded lecture by the Dutch section at the Stedelijk Museum.
	3/17	July 15	P				Amsterdam				Publication of the first issue of the new series of *Potlatch.*
	3/16	August		A			Amsterdam				Article by the Dutch section in *Forum* 6.
	3/18	November		T			Alba				Tract denouncing the disgraceful Cuixard, distributed by the Experimental Laboratory in Alba.
	3/35	November		B			Turin				Pinot-Gallizio publishes *Per un arte unitaria applicabile* (For a unitary applied art).
		December	3				Paris				Editorial board: Constant, Jorn, Sturm, Wyckaert.
		December		F			Paris				Editing of *Sur le passage de quelques personnes...*
		no date							x		Dahou.
1960	4/13	March		Bk			Copenhagen				Jorn and [Jörgen] Nash's *Stavrim, Sonetter* is published by Permild & Rosengreen.
	4/13	Spring								x	Alberts, Oudejans, Armando.
		June	4				Paris				Editorial board: Constant, Jorn, Sturm, Wyckaert.
	5/10	Summer								x	Pinot-Gallizio, Melanotte, [Glauco] Wuerich.
	5/10	Summer							x		Constant.
	5/11	July 20		B			Paris				[Pierre] Canjuers *(Socialisme ou barbarie)* and Debord publish *Préliminaires pour une définition de l'unité du programme révolutionnaire* (Preliminary remarks on the definition of the unity of the revolutionary program).
	5/10	August	SP				Munich				Publication of the first issue of *Spur,* journal of the German section.

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
	5/19	September 24–28			4		London	x			Debord, [Jacqueline] de Jong, Jorn, [Attila] Kotányi, [Katja] Lindell, Nash, Prem, Sturm, Wyckaert, Zimmer.
											Founding of the central council.
											Transfer of the bureau of unitary urbanism to Brussels. Director: Kotányi.
	5/14	September 27									*Resolution of the fourth conference of the SI concerning the imprisonment of Alexander Trocchi.*
	5/26	September 28		L							Declaration by Wyckaert in the name of the SI at a meeting at the *Institute of Contemporary Art.*
		September		F			Paris				Beginning of the filming of *Critique de le séparation.*
	5/12	October 7		T							*Hands Off Alexander Trocchi.* Tract.
	5/12	November 4–6				1	Brussels	x			Debord, (Jorn missing), Kotányi, Nash, Sturm, Wyckaert.
	5/13										Decision to boycott in opposition to *Arguments.*
	5/10	November	SP				Munich				Publication of *Spur* 2.
		December	5				Paris				Editorial board (the central council): Debord, Jorn, Kotányi, Nash, Sturm, Wyckaert.
	6/39	December		T			Munich				*Januar Manifest*, manifesto on celebration by the German section.
	5/11	no date		B			Paris				Jorn publishes *Critique de la politique économique* (Critique of political economy).
	5/11	no date					Silkeborg				The Museum of Modern Art in Silkeborg creates a Situationist library.
		no date?	SP				Munich				Publication of *Spur* 3.
		no date							x		Höfl, Khatib.
1961	6/40	January 6–8				2	Paris	x			Debord, Jorn, Kotányi, Nash, Prem (who takes the place of Sturm), Wyckaert.
	6/39	January		T			Munich				*L'avant-garde est inacceptable* (The avant-garde is unacceptable), tract by the German and Swedish sections.

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
	February		F			Paris				Editing of *Critique de le séparation.*
6/28	February	SP				Munich				Publication of *Spur* 4.
7/50	March							x		[André] Frankin.
6/41 7/53	no date									Van de Loo SCANDAL (Van de Loo Gallery in Essen).
6/40	April 11–13				3	Munich	x			Debord, Kotányi, Nash, Sturm (Jorn having resigned, Wyckaert excluded).
								x		Jorn.
									x	Wyckaert.
6/27	May 17		L			Paris				Tape-recorded lecture by Debord at the C.N.R.S. (National Center for Scientific Research): *Perspectives de modifications conscientes dans la vie quotidienne* (Perspectives for conscious modifications in daily life).
7/51	June	SP				Munich				Publication of *Spur* 5. Threats of confiscation.
	August	6				Paris				Editorial board (the central council): Debord, Kotányi, Nash, Sturm.
7/25	August			5		Göteborg	x			Debord, [Ansgar] Elde, de Jong, Kotányi, [Pieter] Kunzelmann, [Steffan] Larsson, [Jeppesen Victor] Martin, Nash, Prem, Stadler, [Hardy] Strid, Sturm, [Raoul] Vaneigem, Zimmer.
										Election of the new central council.
										Zimmer dispatched to the bureau of unitary urbanism in Brussels.
7/51	November 9	SP				Munich				Publication and confiscation of *Spur* 6. Indictment of Prem, Zimmer, Sturm, Kunzelmann.
7/51	November 10		T			Munich				Tract on the confiscations and the indictments. Leads to the indictment of [Uwe] Lausen.
	no date							x		[Jacques] Ovadia.

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
1962										
	January	SP				Munich				Publication of *Spur* 7.
7/49	February 10–11				4	Paris	x			Debord, (Elde missing), Kotányi, Kunzelmann, Lausen, Nash, Vaneigem. This will turn out to be the last meeting of the central council.
									x	Kunzelmann, Prem, Zimmer, Eisch, [Renée] Nele, [Lothar] Fischer, Stadler (Spurists).
			T							*Nicht hinauslehnen* (Do not lean out), tract on the exclusion of the Spurists.
7/53 8/63	March					Stockholm		x	x	SCISSION: Nash, Elde, de Jong, Lindell, Larsson, Strid (Nashists).
	April	7				Paris				Editorial board (the central council): Debord, Kotányi, Lausen, Vaneigem.
8/64	May 4					Munich				Judgment of the Spurists (five and a half months' suspended sentence).
8/64	June 25		T			Munich				Tract on the Munich trial.
8/64	July 5					Munich				Judgment of Lausen. (Imprisoned for 3 weeks).
8/64	July 16		T			Munich				*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Civilization and its discontents), tract on the condemnation of Lausen.
8/56	October	SR				Copenhagen				Publication of *Situationistisk Revolution* 1, the journal of the Scandanavian section. Director: Martin.
8/66	October					Rome				The last concilium of the Catholic church begins in Rome.
8/66	November 12–16			6		Antwerp	x			Bernstein, Debord, Kotányi, Lausen, Martin, [Jan] Strijbosch, Vaneigem.
										Nomination of the new central council: Bernstein, Debord, Kotányi, Lausen, Martin, Strijbosch, Trocchi, Vaneigem.
										Abolition of the division into sections. The SI conceived as a single, unified center.
8/64	November					Munich				The Spurists appeal. Sentences slightly reduced.
8/63	November		L			Aarhus (Denmark)				Lecture by Martin at the university of Aarhus.

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
1963		January	8				Paris				Editorial board (the central council): Bernstein, Debord, Kotányi, Lausen, Martin, Strijbosch, Trocchi, Vaneigem.
	9/30 12/ 107	February		T			Paris				*Aux poubelles de l'histoire* (In the trashcans of history), tract against Henri Lefebvre and the journal *Arguments*.
	9/31	February 27		T			Antwerp				*Pas de dialogue avec les suspects. Pas de dialogue avec les cons* (No dialogue with the suspects. No dialogue with the morons), tract against certain Stalinist surrealists, in Dutch.
	9/31	April	DG				Brussels				Publication of *Der Deutsche Gedanke* (The German thought) 1, journal of the German section of the SI; Editor in chief: Vaneigem.
	9/33	no date					Paris				The SI meets with two delegates from Zengakuren: T. Kurokawa and Toru Tagaki.
	9/31	June					Odense (Denmark)				SCANDAL: *Destruction RSG-6* demonstration, under the direction of Martin.
				T							Republication of *Danger! Official Secret RSG-6.*
				B							Dutch, French, and English editions of the brochure, *Les situationnistes et les nouvelles formes d'action dans la politique ou l'art* (The Situationists and the new forms of action in politics or in art).
				E							Thermonuclear cartography by Martin and Bernstein.
											Rudi Renson turned back at the Danish border.
	9/33	October 27								X	Kotányi, [Peter] Laugesen.
	9/34	December		T			Paris				*Sur l'exclusion d'Attila Kotányi* (On the exclusion of Attila Kotányi). Tract.
1964	9/36	February 12					Alba				Death of Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio.
	9/37	July		T			Paris				*España en el corazon* (Spain at heart), text on new subversive tracts circulated in Spain.
	9/21 9/36	no date		T			Spain/Denmark				Erotico-political comics.

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
		August	9				Paris				Editorial board: Bernstein, Martin, Strijbosch, Vaneigem.
	10/83	September		A			London				Note by Bernstein in the *Times Literary Supplement*: "About the SI."
	10/83	Autumn								x	Trocchi.
	10/7	December					Berkeley (USA)				SCANDAL: popular celebration at the university.
	10/83	no date		Bk			Paris/Aarhus				Debord's *Contre le cinéma* (Against the cinema) with a preface by Jorn is published by the Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé (Scandanavian Institute of Comparative Vandalism).
1965	10/22	no date					Denmark				On charges made by the "Réarmement moral" (Moral rehabilitation) Martin is indicted for the publication of Spanish and Danish comics. The charges are subsequently dropped.
	10/83	February		T			Denmark				*Im Namen des Volkes* (In the name of the people), tract by Martin on the trial initiated by the "Réarmement moral."
	10/22	March 16					Randers (Denmark)				Anti-militarist SCANDAL orchestrated by Martin (against planned Dutch-German joint military exercise).
	10/24	March 18									Explosion of an incendiary bomb deposited at Martin's home by the provocateur Kanstrup.
	10/83	March 17					Strasbourg				SCANDAL: The cybernetician [Abraham] Moles and the sculptor [Nicolas] Schöffer pelted with tomatoes during a public appearance.
				T							*La tortue dans la vitrine* (The turtle in the window). Tract.
				T							Republication of *Correspondence avec un cybernéticien* (Correspondence with a cybernetician).
	10/83	March								x	Lausen.
	10/43	July		T			Algiers				*Adresse aux révolutionnaires d'Algérie et de tous les pays* (Address to the revolutionaries of Algeria and of all countries).
	10/3	August 13–16					Los Angeles				SCANDAL: huge popular celebration in Watts with pillaging and fires.
	10/7	October 20					Edinburgh				SCANDAL: huge popular celebration at the university, including a teach-in.
	10/84	November		B			Paris				Republication in five languages of the *Adresse aux révolutionnaires...*

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
10/84	December		T			Paris/Algiers				*La lutte des classes en Algérie* (Class struggle in Algeria). Tract put together in Algiers, published in Paris, and distributed in Algiers and the major cities of Algeria.
10/84	December		B			Paris/USA				*The Decline and Fall of the Spectacular-Commodity Economy.* Edited and printed in Paris, distributed in the USA. Very quickly reprinted in New York and subsequently all over the USA.
10/84	no date									Vaneigem finishes *Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes générations* (The revolution of everyday life).
1966	March	10				Paris				Editorial board: Bernstein, [Théo] Frey, Khayati, Martin, Vaneigem.
11/55	no date							x		Renson.
11/54	July 9–11			7		Paris	x			Bernstein, Debord, Frey, Edith Frey, [Jean] Garnault, [Anton] Hartstein, [Herbert] Holl, Khayati, [Ndjangani] Lungela, Martin, [Donald] Nicholson-Smith, Vaneigem, [René] Viénet.
11/55									x	Strijbosch.
11/55	Summer								x	Hartstein.
11/23	November/ December					Strasbourg				SCANDAL with the return of the Durutti Column.
11/33	November		T			Strasbourg				*Le retour de la colonne Durutti* (The return of the Durutti Column), very beautiful comics by A[ndré] Bertrand.
	November		B			Strasbourg				*De la misère en milieu étudiant* (On the poverty of student life).
	no date		B			London				Publication of *Totality for the Kids,* Christopher Gray's translation of *Banalités de base* by Vaneigem.
1967	11/55 11/67 January 15					Paris			x	Frey, Garnault, Holl, Edith Frey (garnaultins).
11/62 11/28	January 22		T			Paris				*Attention! Trois provocateurs* (Watch out! Three provocateurs). Tract on the exclusion of the garnaultins.
	no date		T			France				*Sexologie de la misère. Misère de la sexologie* (Sexology of poverty. Poverty of sexology). Tract distributed in the university dorms of Lyon, Nantes, Paris, Strasbourg, and Toulouse.

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
	11/62	March		B			Paris				Second edition of *De la misère en milieu étudiant.*
	11/3	August		B			Paris				*Le point d'explosion de l'idéologie en Chine* (The exploding-point of ideology in China).
		October	11				Paris				Editorial board: Khayati, Martin, Nicholson-Smith, Vaneigem.
	11/63	November		Bk			Paris				*La société du spectacle* (Society of the spectacle). Book by Debord.
	12/83	November					London		x		Radcliffe.
	12/83	December 21								x	[Timothy] Clark, Gray, Nicholson-Smith.
	11/63	December		Bk			Paris				*Traité de savoir-vivre á l'usage des jeunes générations* (The revolution of everyday life). Book by Vaneigem.
	11/34	December		T			Paris				Beautiful comic-posters by Vaneigem and Bertrand and by Vaneigem and [Gérard] Joannès. Threats of indictment (incitement to murder, to theft, to debauchery) that are subsequently dropped.
		no date		x			New York/ London				Numerous publications by the reconstituted American and English sections.
		no date							x		Bernstein, Lungela.
1968		May 10					Paris				The Situationists participate in the construction and the defense of the barricades in the rue Gay-Lussac.
		May 14					Paris				Establishment of the *Comité Enragés-Internationale Situationniste* in which they merge with the elite of the Nanterre extremists.
		May 15					Paris				The *Comité Enragés-Internationale Situationniste* controls the occupation committee in the Sorbonne.
		May 16: 3 P.M.					Paris				The *Comité Enragés-Internationale Situationniste*, speaking on behalf of the occupied Sorbonne, calls for "the immediate occupation of all factories in France and the formation of workers' councils." A communique from the prime minister responds at 5 P.M. that "in light of various attempts which have been announced or initiated by extremist groups in order to provoke widespread unrest . . . it is the government's duty to maintain the public peace."

DG: Der Deutsche Gedanke
SP: Spur
SR: Situationistisk Rev.

A: Article
B: Brochure
Bk: Book
E: Exhibition
F: Film
L: Lecture
T: Tract

	Reference to Champ Libre reprint of SI journal: issue/page	Dates	Journals	Publications	Meetings	Central Council	Places	Participants	Resignations	Exclusions	
		May 17: 7 P.M.					Paris				The majority of the general assembly gathered in the Sorbonne having not dared approve the call made by its occupation committee, the Situationists announce that they are pulling out of an assembly already formed at its core by moderating bureaucrats. They regroup the more revolutionary elements within the C.M.D.O. (Council for the Continuation of the Occupations) that takes over the buildings of the I.P.N. (Institut Pédagogique National) during the following days.
		End of June									Exile of the most compromised Situationists.
		July					Brussels				Editing of René Viénet's *Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations.*
		October		Bk			Paris				Publication of *Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations.*
		November	SR				Randers (Denmark)				Publication of *Situationistisk Revolution* 2.
1969	12/ 103	June	x				New York				Publication of *Situationist International* 1, the journal of the American section. Editorial board: [Robert] Chasse, [Bruce] Elwell, [Jon] Horelick, [Tony] Verlaan.
	12/ 103	July	x				Milan				Publication of *Internazionale situationista* 1, the journal of the Italian section. Editorial board: [Claudio] Pavan, [Paolo] Salvadori, [Gianfranco] Sanguinetti. Editor in chief: Salvadori.
		September	12				Paris				Journal of the French section. Editorial board: Khayati, [René] Riesel, [Christian] Sébastiani, Vaneigem, Viénet.
	12/ 105	September			8		Venice	x			American section: Chasse, Elwell, Horelick, Verlaan; Scandanavian section: Martin; Italian section: Pavan, [Eduardo] Rothe, Salvadori, Sanguinetti; French section: [François] de Beaulieu, [Patrick] Cheval, [Alain] Chevalier, Debord, Khayati, Riesel, Sébastiani, Vaneigem, Viénet.
									x		Khayati.
		October								x	Chevalier.
		December 19		T			Milan				*Il Reichstag bruccia?* (Is the Reichstag burning?) Tract denouncing the police provocation following the bombs in Milan and in Rome on 12 December. Abusively suspected of complicity, the Italian Situationists must flee.

It was impossible for us to continue our chronology beyond 31 December 1969, and we believe that the period that follows is not accessible to historians. The important archives of the SI dealing with this period have not yet been transferred to the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, in collaboration with which we will not fail to further pursue our investigation as soon as this becomes possible.

We feel, however, that we must point out that certain documents of the SI that have already circulated widely, and which we were able to procure, establish that Raoul Vaneigem was forced to resign in November 1970 as a result of serious contradictions between his programmatic statements and his own practical activities; and that René Riesel was excluded in September 1971 for lying and radical pettiness in both thought and life.

Source: "Renseignements situationnistes (Chronologie)," in Jean-Jacques Raspaud and Jean-Pierre Voyer, *L'Internationale Situationniste: Chronologie / Bibliographie / Protagonistes (Avec un index de noms insultés)* (Paris: Editions Champ Libre, 1972), foldout from inside front cover.

A partial Italian translation covering the years 1956–1961 can be found in Mirella Bandini, *L'estetico il politico: Da Cobra all'Internazionale situazionista, 1948–1957* (Rome: Officina Edizioni, 1977), pp. 352–59.

Checklist of the Exhibition

The exhibition and its checklist includes works that can be attributed strictly to the Situationist International; works produced by SI members prior to or after their formal affiliation with the group; works created by the members of such SI antecedents as the Lettrist International or the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus; and, finally, works by a wide variety of groups and individuals who were directly or indirectly influenced by the Situationists. While the provenance of the SI or SI-related works in the exhibition has been provided in the checklist (SI, pre-SI, post-SI, LI, and so forth), the works produced by those who were influenced by, but not properly part of, the Situationist International appear without group affiliation.

Works of Art

Art & Language
Map to Not Indicate Canada, 1967
Impression on paper
63 x 52 cm
Collection of Ghislain Mollet-Vieville, Paris, France

Art & Language
Map of Thirty-six Square, 1967
Impression on paper
67 x 57 cm
Collection of Ghislain Mollet-Vieville, Paris, France

Art & Language
Map of an Area, 1966
Impression on paper
Collection of Ghislain Mollet-Vieville, Paris, France

Daniel Buren
Les hommes-Sandwichs (The Sandwich-board Men), March 1968–1980
Photo Souvenirs
Private Collection

Daniel Buren
7 Ballets in Manhattan, 1973–1975
Photo Souvenirs
Private Collection

Nigel Coates
Gamma Tokyo, 1985
drawing
Collection of Nigel Coates, London, UK

Constant
Ambiance de jeu (Environment for Play), 1956
pre-SI
wood, copper
158 x 158 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Ontwerp voor een Zigeunerkamp (Model for a Gypsy Camp), 1958
SI
wood, plexiglass, aluminum
130 cm diameter
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
New Babylon nord (New Babylon North), 1958
SI
watercolor and collage
100 x 100 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Rode Sector (Red Sector), 1958
SI
metal, plexiglass, wood, paint
103 x 84 x 32 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Gele Sector (Yellow Sector), 1958
SI
metal, plexiglass, wood
90 x 84 x 24 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Groep Sectoren (Group Sector), 1962
SI
phototype and red ink
57 x 68 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Industrial Landscape, 1959
SI
metal, plexiglass, wood
66 x 54 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Klein Labyr (Small Labyrinth), 1959
SI
metal, plexiglass
70 x 35 x 56 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Hangende Sector (Hanging Sector), 1960
aluminum, unoxydated steel
130 x 100 x 80 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Labyratoire (Labyratory), 1962
post-SI
China ink
48 x 69 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
New Babylon, Amsterdam, 1963
post-SI
colored ink on plan of the city
53 x 62 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
New Babylon, Paris, 1963
post-SI
colored ink on plan of the city
47 x 61 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
New Babylon, Bird's Eye View I, 1964
post-SI
China ink
39.5 x 53 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
New Babylon, Bird's Eye View III, 1964
post-SI
China ink
50 x 65 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Groot Labyr (Large Labyrinth), 1966
post-SI
unpolished aluminum
85 x 95 x 80 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
Ode à l'Odéon (Ode to the Odéon), 1969
post-SI
oil on canvas
190 x 200 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Constant
New Babylon, Collage View, 1971
post-SI
watercolor and pencil on photomontage
135 x 223 cm
Collection of Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, The Netherlands

Isaac Cronin and Terrel Seltzer
Call It Sleep
video
Collection of Isaac Cronin, Los Angeles, USA

Mohamed Dahou
Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui (Morocco Today), 1954
LI
collage photo
40.5 x 28.5 cm
Private Collection

Guy Debord
Le temps passe, en effet, et nous passons avec lui (Time Passes, and We Pass with It), 1954
LI
collage
28.5 x 25.5 cm
Private Collection

Factory Records
Durutti Column, *The Return of the Durutti Column*, 1979
record cover
Collection of Tony Wilson, Manchester, UK

Factory Records
The Haçienda Must Be Built
T-shirt with slogan
cotton
Collection of Tony Wilson, Manchester, UK

Gruppe SPUR (Hans-Peter Zimmer, Heimrad Prem, Helmut Sturm, Erwin Eisch)/Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Untitled, 1959
SI
oil on canvas
108 x 278 cm
Courtesy of Galerie Christa Schubbe, Dusseldorf, West Germany

Jacqueline de Jong
Jack the Ripper, 1964
post-SI
oil on canvas
192 x 130 cm
Collection of Jacqueline de Jong, Galerie Brinkman, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Asger Jorn
Pêcheur de nuages (Cloud Fisherman), 1959
SI
oil on canvas
43 x 60
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Asger Jorn
Dovre Gubben (Lord of the Mountain Trolls), 1959
SI
oil on canvas
130 x 97 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
Paris by Night, 1959
SI
53 x 37 cm
Collection of Micky and Pierre Alechinsky, Bougival, France

Asger Jorn
Hirschbrunft im Wilden Kaiser (The Mating Call of the Buck on Wilden Kaiser), 1960
SI
oil on cardboard
90 x 120 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Asger Jorn
Lockung (Temptation), 1960
SI
oil on cardboard
55 x 60 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Asger Jorn
L'avant-garde se rend pas (The Avant-Garde Doesn't Give Up), 1962
post-SI
oil on canvas
73 x 60 cm
Collection of Micky and Pierre Alechinsky, Bougival, France

Asger Jorn
Grand baiser au cardinal d'amérique (A Big Kiss to the American Cardinal), 1962
post-SI
oil on canvas
93 x 73 cm
Collection of Micky and Pierre Alechinsky, Bougival, France

Asger Jorn
Poussin, 1962
post-SI
oil on canvas
103 x 72.5 cm
Collection of Micky and Pierre Alechinsky, Bougival, France

Asger Jorn
Le pêcheur (The Fisherman), 1962
post-SI
oil on canvas
155 x 104 cm
Collection of Micky and Pierre Alechinsky, Bougival, France

Asger Jorn
Les deux pingouins (The Two Penguins), 1962
post-SI
oil on canvas
162 x 400 cm, diptych of 2 panels
Courtesy of Stadtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, West Germany

Latino America y yo tenerus un nidito en Suiza (Latin America and I Have a Little Nest in Switzerland)
2 sheets of photomontage
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

J. V. Martin
Den Gyldne Flåde (The Golden Fleet) (9 paintings), 1960
SI
oil on canvas and modeling clay
110 x 150 cm
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Hoffman, Randers, Denmark

J. V. Martin
2 Thermonuclear Maps, 1963
SI
oil on canvas, masonite, modeling clay
100 x 135 cm
Collection of Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Vaxtorp, Sweden

J. V. Martin/J. J. Thorsen
Collective Painting, 1960
SI
oil on canvas
300 x 180 cm
Collection of Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Vaxtorp, Sweden

J. V. Martin/J. J. Thorsen
La vie en rouge et noir (Life in Red and Black), 1960
SI
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
Collection of Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Vaxtorp, Sweden

J. V. Martin/J. J. Thorsen
Ni Dieu, ni maître (Neither God, Nor Master), 1960
SI
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
Collection of Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Vaxtorp, Sweden

J. V. Martin/J. J. Thorsen
Permanent Revolt, 1960
SI
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
Collection of Jens Jørgen Thorsen, Vaxtorp, Sweden

Mario Merz
Che fare? (What Is to Be Done?), 1968
metal container, wax, blue neon, transformer
15 x 50 x 20 cm
Collection of Musée departemental des Vosges, Epinal, France

Jörgen Nash
The Dragon, 1960
SI
gouache on collage
50 x 27 x 5 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

Jörgen Nash
What It Does, How It Works, 1966
post-SI
collage and gouache on canvas
100 x 300 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

Jörgen Nash
Garden Plan, 1976
post-SI
serigraph
121 x 73.5 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

Jörgen Nash
Television Means Brainwashing, 1976
post-SI
serigraph
111 x 81 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

Nash, Debord, Jorn, Strid, Martin, de Jong, Zimmer, Prem, Sturm
Untitled, August 1961
SI
oil on canvas
86 x 120.5 cm
Collection of Museet i Halmstad, Halmstad, Sweden

Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Caverna dell'antimateria (The Cavern of Anti-Matter), 1959
SI
oil on canvas
205 x 790 cm
Private Collection

Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Pittura industriale (Industrial Painting), 1959
SI
oil on canvas
70 x 7400 cm
Courtesy of Martano Gallery, Turin, Italy

Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
Le temple des mécréants (The Temple of Miscreants), 1959
SI
oil on canvas
206 x 985 cm
Collection of Carlo Monzino, Milan, Italy

Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio
La notte cieca (Blind Night), 1962
post-SI
oil on canvas
200 x 1000 cm
Courtesy of Martano Gallery, Turin, Italy

Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio/Guy Debord
Abolition du travail aliéné (Abolition of Alienated Labor)
SI
oil and resin on canvas
73 x 105 cm
Private Collection

Heimrad Prem
Manifesto, 1960
SI
oil on canvas
60 x 80 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Heimrad Prem
Rausch (Ecstasy), 1960
SI
oil on canvas
70 x 50 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Heimrad Prem
Schrei (Shout), 1960
SI
oil on canvas
70 x 55 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Jamie Reid
Nature Still Draws a Crowd, 1972
collage
30 x 40 cm
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Jamie Reid
Save Petrol Burn Cars, 1974
sticker
30 x 40 cm
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Jamie Reid
She Came, She Stooped, She Conquered, 1982
collage and paint
30 x 40 cm
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Jamie Reid
Sex Pistols Mural, 1983
collage (6 panels with potted plants)
232 x 632 cm
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Jamie Reid
Media Sickness—More Contagious than AIDS, 1984
printed scarf
120 x 120 cm
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Jamie Reid
Media Sickness—More Contagious than AIDS, 1984
2 photos
120 x 120 cm
Collection of Lawrence Watson, London, UK

Jamie Reid
Thatcher Mask, 1988
collage
67 x 37 cm
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Jamie Reid c/o Assorted Images
T-shirts
cotton
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Ralph Rumney
Venice Project, 1960
post-SI
three-part photomontage project
Collection of Roddy Maude-Roxby, London, UK

Hardy Strid
Love, Love Not (Automatic Amusement Machine), 1948
pre-SI
wood, cardboard, glass
50 x 16.5 x 5.5 cm
Collection of Hardy Strid, Halmstad, Sweden

Helmut Sturm
Martyrium III, 1960
SI
oil on canvas
109 x 139 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Maurice Wyckaert
Plan of Brussels with Trolley Tracks, 1960
SI
oil on canvas
100 x 100 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Hans-Peter Zimmer
Die Konformistenbraut (The Conformist's Bride), 1961
SI
oil on canvas
115 x 130 cm
Courtesy of Galerie van de Loo, Munich, West Germany

Books

Guy Debord
Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendence situationniste internationale (Report on the Construction of Situations and on the Conditions of Organization and Action of the International Situationist Trend), 1957
SI
21.3 x 13.5 cm, 20 pages
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Guy Debord
Mémoires, 1959
Structures portantes d'Asger Jorn
SI
27.5 x 21.5 cm, 64 pages
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Guy Debord
Contre le cinéma (Against the Cinema), 1964
Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé/ Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie
SI
90 pages
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Guy Debord
La société du spectacle (Society of the Spectacle), 1967
Buchet-Chastel
SI
176 pages
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Guy Debord
Oeuvres cinématographiques complètes, 1952–1978 (Complete Cinematographic Works), 1978
Editions Champ Libre
SI
320 pages
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
Contre le fonctionnalisme (Against Functionalism), 1957
pre-SI
26.5 x 21.5 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
Fin de Copenhague, May 1957
Conseiller technique pour le détournement: Guy Debord
Permild & Rosengreen
pre-SI
25.5 x 17.5 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
Structure et changement: Sur le role de l'intelligence dans la creation artistique (Structure and Change: On the Role of Intelligence in Artistic Creation), 1957
pre-SI
28.5 x 22.5 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
Critique de la politique economique suivie de la lutte finale (Critique of Political Economy Followed by the Final Struggle), 1960 (green cover)
Internationale situationniste
SI
20.5 x 13.5 cm, 38 pages
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
Critique de la politique economique suivie de la lutte finale, 1960
Internationale situationniste
SI
20.5 x 13.5 cm, 38 pages
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
Critique de la politique economique suivie de la lutte finale, 1960 (green cover)
Internationale situationniste
SI
20.5 x 13.5 cm
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Asger Jorn
Pour la forme: Ebauche d'une méthodologie des arts (In Defense of Form: Outline of a Methodology for the Arts), 1958
SI
27.5 x 21 cm, 140 pages
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Asger Jorn
De la méthode triolectique dans ses applications en situlogie générale (On the Triolectic Method in Its Applications to General "Situlogy"), 1964
Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé
post-SI
21.3 x 13.5 cm, 12 pages
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Asger Jorn/Noël Arnaud
La langue verte et cuite (The Raw Language and the Cooked), 1968
Bibliothèque d'Alexandrie
post-SI
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International, 1974
Edited by Christopher Gray, design by Jamie Reid
Free Fall
post-SI
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International, 1974
Edited by Christopher Gray, design by Jamie Reid
Free Fall
post-SI
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Jörgen Nash
Hanegal, 1961
book of poems with chicken-wire cover
SI
28 x 22 x 2 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

Jörgen Nash
Situationister i Konsten
post-SI
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

Jörgen Nash/Asger Jorn
Stavrim, Sonetter, 1960
SI
27 x 22 x 2 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

NY-Irrealisme (New York Irrealism), 1969
22.3 x 15.7 cm, 16 pages
Private Collection

Freddy Perlman
The Incoherence of the Intellectual
13.5 x 23 cm
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

On the Poverty of Student Life, 1967
SI
22.5 x 13.5 cm
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Jean-Jacques Raspaud/ Jean-Pierre Voyer
L'Internationale situationniste: Chronologie/Bibliographie/ Protagonistes (Avec un index des noms insultés) (The Situationist International: Chronology/Bibliography/ Protagonists [With an Index of Insulted Names]), 1972
Editions Champ Libre
174 pages
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Jamie Reid
Suburban Press Poster Book (copy), 1974
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Raoul Vaneigem
Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes generations (Treatise on Living for the Use of the Young Generation [published in translation as *The Revolution in Everyday Life*]), 1967
Gallimard
SI
304 pages
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Raoul Vaneigem
Traité de savoir-vivre à l'usage des jeunes generations, 1968
Gallimard
SI
304 pages
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

M. Velli
Manual for Revolutionary Leaders
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

René Viénet
Enragés et situationnistes dans le mouvement des occupations (Enragés and Situationists in the Occupation Movements), 1968
Gallimard
SI
324 pages
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Ten Days That Shook the University, 1967
Edited by Christopher Gray
SI
16 x 27 cm
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

Totality for the Kids, 1966
Translation by Christopher Gray of Raoul Vaneigem's *Banalités de base*
SI
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Journals, Magazines

ARK, 1958
Ralph Rumney
post-SI
magazine, includes the second part of the *Venice Project*
27 x 22 cm
Collection of Roddy Maude-Roxby, London, UK

Casabella (with Strum booklets)
Collection of Nigel Coates, London, UK

Diversion no. 1
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Drakabygget, 1962–
Jörgen Nash
all issues, 7 books
post-SI
24 x 18 cm
Private Collection

En cuestion nos. 1 and 2
2 volumes, plastic orange cover
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Eristica no. 1, 1956
International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (second issue)
33.1 x 23.2 cm
Collection of Musée nationale d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Imagine e forma (Image and Form) no. 1, 1954
International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (first issue)
33 x 23 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Internationale situationniste nos. 1–8, 1958–1963, and nos. 10–11, 1966–1967
International situationniste
23.5 x 16 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Internationale situationniste
nos. 9 and 12, 1964 and 1969
Internationale situationniste
23.5 x 16 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Les lèvres nues (Naked Lips)
nos. 6, 7, and 9, 1954
Marcel Mariën/Revolutionary Surrealists
21.5 x 13.5 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

NATO, 1983–1985
Albion issue (1983), Apprentice issue (1984), and Gamma City issue (1985)
Collection of Nigel Coates, London, UK

Omphalos
blue cover
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Provo nos. 1 and 2, 1966
Amsterdam
Collection of Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France

Situationistisk Revolution
(Situationist Revolution) no. 1, 1962
Situationist International, Scandinavian section
Private Collection

Situationist International
no. 1, June 1969
Situationist International, American section
Collection of Leandro Katz, London, UK

Situationist Times nos. 1–6, 1962–1967
Jacqueline de Jong
post-SI
28 x 22 cm
Collection of Jacqueline de Jong, Galerie Brinkman, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Situationist Times (blue)
nos. 1–6, 1962–1967
Jacqueline de Jong
post-SI
28 x 22 cm
Collection of Roddy Maude-Roxby, London, UK

Situationist Times (white), 1962–1967
Jacqueline de Jong
post-SI
28 x 22 cm
Collection of Roddy Maude-Roxby, London, UK

Situationist Times (red), 1962–1967
Jacqueline de Jong
post-SI
28 x 22 cm
Collection of Roddy Maude-Roxby, London, UK

SPUR nos. 1–7, 1960–1961
Helmut Sturm, Heimrad Prem, Hans-Peter Zimmer, Lothar Fischer
SI
28 x 29 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Suburban Press nos. 1–6, 1970
Collection of Jamie Reid, London, UK

Exhibition Catalogues

Modifications
Asger Jorn exhibition
Galerie Rive Gauche, Paris
May 6 to May 28, 1959
SI
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Nouvelles défigurations
(New Defacements)
Asger Jorn exhibition
Galerie Rive Gauche, Paris
June 1963
post-SI
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Destruktion af RSG-6: En kollektiv manifestation af Situationistisk International
(Destruction of RSG-6: A Collective Manifestation of the Situationist International)
Galerie EXI, Odense, Denmark
1963
SI
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Tracts, Documents, Pamphlets

Adresse à tous les travailleurs
(Address to All Workers), 1968
SI
tract
Collection of Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France

Adresse aux révolutionnaries d'Algérie et de tous les pays
(Address to the Revolutionaries of Algeria and of All Countries), 1965
SI
tract
22 x 24 cm, 28 pages
Collection of Jean-Pierre George, Paris, France

Attention! Trois provocateurs
(Attention! Three Provocateurs), 1967
SI
tract
32 x 51 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Avant-garde ist unerwunscht!
(The Avant-Garde Is Not Wanted!), 1961
SI
tract
28.5 x 31 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

The Beginning of an Epoch
pamphlet
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Carton UNEF
tract
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Class Struggle, 1977
tract
Collection of Isaac Cronin, Los Angeles, USA

Critique europeéne des corps academiques des universités (European Criticism of the Academic Corps of the Universities), signed Mutant, 1961
SI
tract
32 x 12 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Critique europeéne des corps academiques des universités, signed Mutant, 1961
SI
tract
32 x 12 cm
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

Guy Debord
Guide psychogéographique de Paris
SI
map
60 x 74 cm
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Guy Debord
Naked City, 1957
SI
map
33 x 47.5 cm
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Declaration sur les procès de I.S. en Allemagne (Declaration on the Actions of the SI in Germany), 1962
SI
27 x 21 cm, 4 pages
Collection of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

España en el corazon (Spain at Heart), 1964
SI
tract
24 x 14 cm
Collection of the Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, France

The Fetish Speaks
pamphlet
15 x 25 cm
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

God Crazy, 1987
tract
15 x 25 cm
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

La guerre de la liberté doit être faite avec colére (The War for Liberty Must Be Fought with Rage), 1954
tract for *L'Internationale Lettriste* no. 4
LI
72 x 29 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Hands Off Alexander Trocchi, 1960
SI
tract
27 x 21 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Jamais quand c'est la vie elle-même qui s'en va (Never When It Is Life Itself That Is Leaving), 1968
tract
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Januar Manifest (January Manifesto), 1961
Gruppe SPUR
tract
60 x 21.5 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Leandro Katz
No es suficiente ser revolutionario para ser un artista (To Be an Artist, It Is Not Enough to Be Revolutionary)
pamphlet, photomontage
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Ein Kultureller Putsch während Ihr schlaft! (A Cultural Putsch While You Sleep!), 1959
SI
tract
28.5 x 30 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, France

La lutte des classes en Algérie (Class Struggle in Algeria), 1965
SI
tract
Collection of Jean-Pierre George, Paris, France

Malgre l'inexistence de Dieu (In Spite of the Nonexistence of God), 1968
tract
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

De la misère en milieu étudiant (On the Poverty of Student Life), Strasbourg, 1966
SI
pamphlet
22.5 x 13.5 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

De la misère en milieu étudiant, Strasbourg, 1966
SI
pamphlet
22.5 x 13.5 cm
Collection of Mme. Laure de Buzon, Paris, France

Jörgen Nash
Alternative Documenta
post-SI
pamphlet, irregular hexagon
24 x 60 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

Jörgen Nash
Follow Courbet
post-SI?
tract
22 x 30.5 cm
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

Nervenruh! Keine Experimente! (Calm Your Nerves! No Experiments!), 1958
SI
tract
30 x 21 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Nicht hinauslehnen (Do Not Lean Out), 1962
SI
tract
29 x 14 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Nicht hinauslehnen (Do Not Lean Out), 1962
SI
tract
29 x 14 cm
Collection of Paul-Hervé Parsy, Paris, France

Ni de votre mort, ni de votre survie (Neither Your Death, Nor Your Survival), 1968
tract
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Nouveau théâtre d'opérations dans la culture (New Theater of Operations within Culture), 1958
SI
tract
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

La nuit du cinéma (The Night of Cinema), Paris, 1952
Lettrists
tract
27.5 x 21.5 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Pas de dialogue avec les suspects. Pas de dialogue avec les cons (No More Talk with the Suspects. No More Talk with the Morons), 1963
SI
tract
35 x 27 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Le point d'explosion de l'ideologie en Chine (The Exploding-Point of Ideology in China), 1967
SI
pamphlet
22 x 24 cm
Collection of Jean-Pierre George, Paris, France

The Poor and the Superpoor
pamphlet
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Aux poubelles de la gloire (In the Trashcans of Fame), 1968
SI
tract
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Aux poubelles de l'histoire (In the Trashcans of History), 1963
SI
tract
48 x 32 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Paris, France

Pour le pouvoir des conseils ouvriers (For Power of the Workers' Councils), 1968
SI
tract
Collection of Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France

Aux producteurs de l'art moderne (To the Producers of Modern Art), 1958
SI
1.8 x 90 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Reich
green, yellow, beige, white
4 tracts
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Au secours de van Guglielmi (To the Rescue of van Guglielmi), 1958
SI
tract
25.4 x 15.9 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Sexologie de la misère (Sexology of Poverty), 1967
SI
tract
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Misère de la sexologie (Poverty of Sexology), 1967
SI
tract
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

La société sans classe a trouvé ses artistes, Vive l'Internationale situationniste (The Classless Society Has Found Its Artists, Long Live the Situationist International), 1958 (2 examples)
SI
31.5 x 23 cm
Collection of Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

Toutes ces dames au salon (To All the Ladies at the Exhibition), Brussels, 1956
LI
tract
38 x 37.5 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Alexander Trocchi
The Invisible Insurrection Memo
SI
pamphlet
Private collection

Posters, Comics

Abolition de la société de classe (Abolition of Class Society), 1968
SI
poster
40 x 50 cm
Collection of Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France

Abolition de la société de classe, 1968
SI
poster
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Arcade/Barricade
posters
Collection of Adam Cornford, San Francisco, California

Avis mutuelle nationale des étudiants de France (Mutual National Opinion of French Students)
section of Strasbourg
2 orange posters
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

A bas la société spectaculaire-marchande (Down with the Spectacular-Commodity Society), 1968
SI
poster
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

André Bertrand
Le retour de la colonne Durutti (The Return of the Durutti Column), 1966
Strasbourg
comics
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Bureaucratic Comix
post-SI
poster
Private Collection

Bye Bye Turbin—It's Not Only Rock and Roll, 1978
poster
Collection of Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France

Et ça ne fait que commencer
yellow poster
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

City of Palo Alto
poster
Collection of Adam Cornford, San Francisco, USA

Cleveland Indian War
poster
Collection of Isaac Cronin, Los Angeles, USA

Comics
posters
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Create Situations
post-SI
poster
Private Collection

Diversion
comic strips
Collection of Adam Cornford, San Francisco, USA

Don't Change Life Change Leaders
poster
Collection of Adam Cornford, San Francisco, USA

Fin de l'université (The End of the University), 1968
SI
poster
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Fin de l'université—Oh mon Dieu (The End of the University—Oh My God), 1968
SI
poster
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Il n'est pas de Sauveur Supreme, ni Dieu, ni Castro, ni Mao (He Is Not the Supreme Savior, Nor God, Nor Castro, Nor Mao), 1968
poster
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Internationale situationniste
7 comics
drawn strips
21 x 29.7 cm
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Jesus Loves You: Kill Yourself
poster
Collection of Adam Cornford, San Francisco, USA

Gérard Joannès
poster
Private Collection

Asger Jorn
4 posters by Asger Jorn, 1968
post-SI
75 x 40 cm
Collection of Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France

La lutte des classes en Algérie (Class Struggle in Algeria)
SI
posters (double face)
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Map of the Second Situationist International
post-SI
poster
45 x 62
Collection of Peter Wollen, London, UK

Marie Antoinette Bakeries
poster
Collection of Adam Cornford, San Francisco, USA

Jörgen Nash
Alternative Documenta
poster with collage
123 x 97 cm
Collection of Jörgen Nash, Orkelljunga, Sweden

New York Irrealism, 1969
poster
44.5 x 29.5 cm
Private Collection

Occupation des usines (Occupation of the Factories), 1968
poster
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Le pouvoir aux conseils des travailleurs (Power to the Workers' Councils), 1968
poster
40 x 50 cm
Collection of Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, Paris, France

Le pouvoir aux conseils des travailleurs (Power to the Workers' Councils), 1968
poster
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Que peut le mouvement revolutionnaire maintenant? Tout. Que devient-il entre les mains? (Who Fears the Revolutionary Movement Now? Everyone. What Will Become of It Once They Get Their Hands on It?), 1968
reduced poster
Collection of Pierre-Simon Callot, Lille, France

Situation Liberation Front
poster
Collection of Adam Cornford, San Francisco, USA

Sixth Congress of the Situationist International
Antwerp, December 12 to 15, 1962
SI
poster, black on yellow
55 x 36.5 cm
Collection of L. Gervereau, Paris, France

Somus todos unos chancho-burghese (We Are All Filthy Bourgeois)
photo-comics
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Speedwatch
poster
Collection of Leandro Katz, New York, USA

Hardy Strid
Situationist Superman, 1960
SI
comics, China ink
29.7 x 21.1 cm
Collection of Hardy Strid, Halmstad, Sweden

Strike Anywhere
poster
35.3 x 51 cm
Private Collection

We're Tired of Playing with Ourselves
poster
Collection of Isaac Cronin, Los Angeles, USA

Wildcat Comics
poster
Collection of Isaac Cronin, Los Angeles, USA

Definitions

constructed situation
A moment of life concretely and deliberately constructed by the collective organization of a unitary ambiance and a game of events.

situationist
Having to do with the theory or practical activity of constructing situations. One who engages in the construction of situations. A member of the Situationist International.

situationism
A meaningless term improperly derived from the above. There is no such thing as situationism, which would mean a doctrine of interpretation of existing facts. The notion of situationism is obviously devised by anti-Situationists.

psychogeography
The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.

psychogeographical
Relating to psychogeography. That which manifests the geographical environment's direct emotional effects.

psychogeographer
One who explores and reports on psychogeographical phenomena.

dérive
A mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of transient passage through varied ambiances. Also used to designate a specific period of continuous dériving.

Source: Ken Knabb, ed. and trans., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981), pp. 45–46.

unitary urbanism
The theory of the combined use of arts and techniques for the integral construction of a milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior.

détournement
Short for: détournement of preexisting aesthetic elements. The integration of present or past artistic production into a superior construction of a milieu. In this sense there can be no Situationist painting or music, but only a Situationist use of these means. In a more primitive sense, détournement within the old cultural spheres is a method of propaganda, a method that testifies to the wearing out and loss of importance of those spheres.

culture
The reflection and prefiguration of the possibilities of organization of everyday life in a given historical moment; a complex of aesthetics, feelings, and mores through which a collectivity reacts on the life that is objectively determined by its economy. (We are defining this term only in the perspective of the creation of values, not in that of the teaching of them.)

decomposition
The process in which the traditional cultural forms have destroyed themselves as a result of the emergence of superior means of dominating nature which enable and require superior cultural constructions. We can distinguish between an active phase of the decomposition and effective demolition of the old superstructures—which came to an end around 1930—and a phase of repetition that has prevailed since then. The delay in the transition from decomposition to new constructions is linked to the delay in the revolutionary liquidation of capitalism.

Notes on Contributors

Troels Andersen is the Director of the Silkeborg Kunstmuseum, Silkeborg, Denmark.

Mirella Bandini is the author of *L'estetico il politico: Da Cobra all'Internazionale situazionista, 1948–1957*.

Mark Francis is Adjunct Curator at the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Thomas Y. Levin is an Acting Instructor and Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Philosophy, Yale University.

Greil Marcus is the author of *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century* and *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music*. He is a columnist for the *Village Voice* and *California Magazine*.

Elisabeth Sussman is Deputy Director for Programs at The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

Peter Wollen is a filmmaker and teacher in the Cinema Studies Program at the University of California, Los Angeles. His latest film is *Friendship's Death* and he has written widely on art, film, and semiotics.